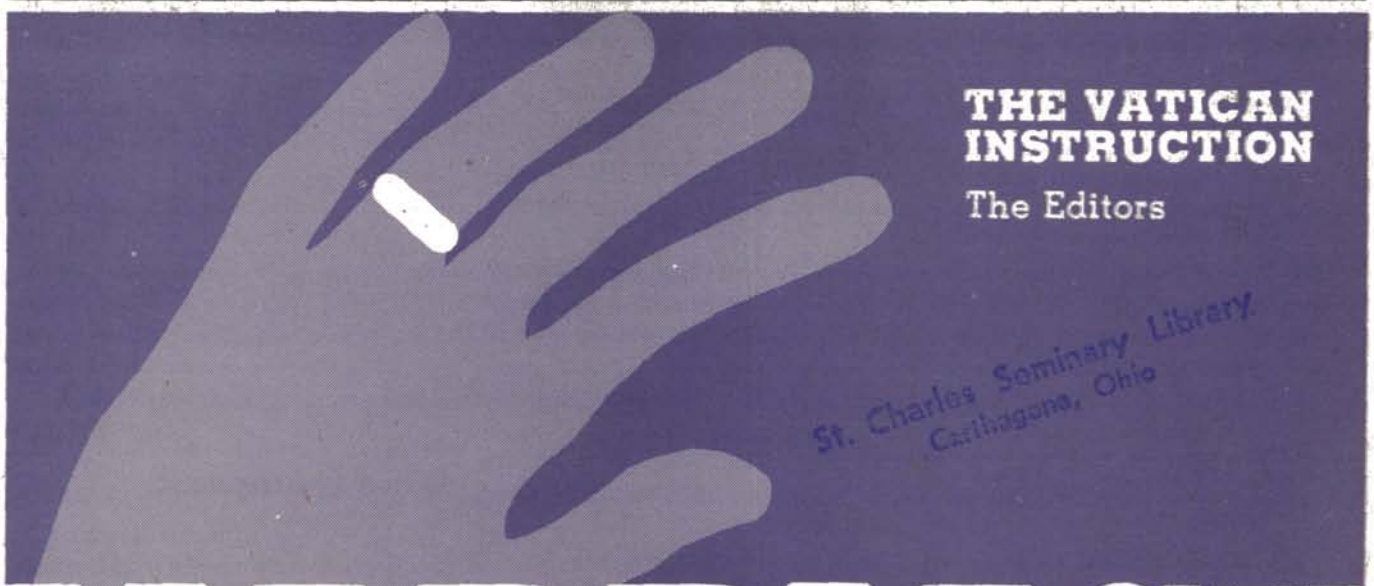
$1.50 March 27, 1987

# COMMONWEAL



## THE VATICAN INSTRUCTION
The Editors

St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

# MARRIAGE

## AND EXPERIENCE
Lisa Sowle Cahill

## AND INDISSOLUBILITY
Bernard Cooke

## AND DIVORCE
John Garvey

## SOUTH AFRICA'S BISHOPS & SANCTIONS
Rollins E. Lambert

## NOVAK & LIBERATIO
Paul E. Sigmund

ST CHARLES SEM LIB
CARTHAGENA STA
CELINA OH 45822
8712 00799788N

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CORRESPONDENCE

## Letter on homosexuals

Brooklyn, N.Y.

*To the Editors:* The Vatican letter on homosexuality mentioned in your editorial ["Back of the Hand," December 5] is so bad that it is good. It may well do for "homosexuals" what *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical against artificial contraception, did for the "birth controllers." . . . The tone and content of the Vatican's recent document on homosexuality is intemperate, blatantly hostile, and vengeful. Its withdrawal of support for gays' civil rights and its collusion in anti-lesbian/gay violence (para. 10), together with it's exploiting of the AIDS health crisis (para. 9), will radicalize even the moderates.

Its studious avoidance of the word "orientation" throughout most of the document, in favor of "condition," "inclination," and "tendency," is no innocent linguistic sleight of hand. In attempting linguistically to shift the grounds of discussion, the Vatican is taking a majestic leap back into a medieval world of philosophical language and distinctions.

This strategic move renders an already violent and unconscionable document, ultimately irrational and irrelevant. It will disaffect fair-minded people, counselors, teachers, and confessors everywhere who have come to understand and appreciate a generally useful distinction between sexual orientation, whether heterosexual or homosexual, and subsequent sexual behavior. This distinction has been employed by Catholic moral theology with a certain sense of self-congratulation for at least a quarter century, and reached something of a high point in the American bishops' pastoral letter, *To Live In Christ Jesus*, 1976, a document and distinction reaffirmed by John Paul II.

As Bishop James Malone said himself in his recent outgoing speech as president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops: "Teaching is, after all, not a unilateral activity. One is only teaching if someone is being taught. . . . Too often in the past, pastoral letters taught little, not because they said nothing, but because few were listening."

In view of the papal visit to the U.S. in the fall, 1987, and since the American bishops will not put in place a consultative process on sexuality like that they used so effectively on nuclear war and economic justice, all those millions of people in diverse situations who love the church, but suffer the oppression of its inadequate sexual ethic, need to create coalition mechanisms to air the issues nationally over the coming months. All true believers and lovers of the church need to participate in the church's own sexual redemption by standing up to Peter in nonviolent truth-telling.

KEVIN GORDON
Brooklyn College, CUNY

## A mother's conscience

Cleveland, Ohio

*To the Editors:* I was deeply touched by Fr. John McNeill's response "No Time for Silence," [December 5] giving excerpts from his statement responding to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith guidelines on homosexuality. In the same statement printed elsewhere, he also called them, "a vicious political attack," and indeed, they are.

To this mother of a gay son, loved as much as his three straight siblings, the guidelines are the final straw in a personal struggle of conscience. They are an incitement to violence and hatred from an institution supposedly founded to practice and teach the love of God and neighbor. The Curran and Hunthausen affairs were tragic enough, but perhaps could somehow be justified in terms of church discipline. . . .

My conscience leads me to ask how I can morally offer financial or other support to an institution whose official documents preach hatred. This has been a personal struggle marked by such pain I could term it "agony," after working in and for the Catholic church for over forty years.

With great sadness, I have decided I can no longer be a member of the *Roman* Catholic church. I must say with Martin Luther, "Here I stand; I can do no other." I will not deprive myself of meaningful Eucharistic celebrations, nor can I at this point, join another church. Schism has always seemed sad to me. Now schism which might lead to an American Catholic church in my lifetime seems a grace and gift I will pray for.

NAME WITHHELD

## What is natural?

Arlington Heights, Ill.

*To the Editors:* Regarding your recent debate on homosexuality and gay rights ["Gay Rights/Gay Plight," December 26], the Vatican rightly reaffirmed the traditional Judeo-Christian teaching that homosexuality is unnatural, abnormal, and immoral.

The facts of biology buttress the contention that heterosexuality is prescriptively natural and normal and that homosexuality is prescriptively unnatural and abnormal. For example, male and female sex organs complement each

*(Continued on page 189)*

*Commonweal* is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Copyright © 1987 Commonweal Foundation.

*Illustrations*: P. 164, Margulies, Rothco; p. 167, Bas, Tachydromos; pp. 170, 172, 178, & 181, Paul Valerry; p. 171, p. 174, Baloo, Rothco; p. 181, Rita Corbin; p. 188, Emil Antonucci.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

## CONTENTS

Volume CXIV, Number 6


| | |
|---|---|
| Correspondence | 162 |
| Editorials | 163 |
| Fleeing to Canada: *Edmund Gress* | 164 |
| Sanctions in context: *Rollins E. Lambert* | 166 |
| Learning from history: *Eva Fleischner* | 167 |
| Fidelity & faultlines: *John Garvey* | 168 |
| Principles & Politics: *J. Bryan Hehir* | 169 |
| Divorced from experience: *Lisa Sowle Cahill* | 171 |
| What God has joined together: *Bernard Cooke* | 178 |
| Verse: *Jeffrey Skinner* | 176 |
| Screen: *Tom O'Brien* | 182 |
| Stage: *Gerald Weales* | 184 |


## BOOKS


| | |
|---|---|
| Will It Liberate?: *Paul E. Sigmund* | 185 |
| The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore: *Wayne Koestenbaum* | 186 |
| Dear America: *C. Peter Ripley* | 187 |


## STAFF


Editor: Peter Steinfels
Assistant Editors: David Toolan, Karen Sue Smith, Patrick Jordan
Production Editor: Anne Robertson
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Movies: Tom O'Brien
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr.
Staff: Karen F. Silva, Harriette Balsky, Janice Gates
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin


*Commonweal*, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Single copy, $1.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $28; Canada, $30; foreign, $33. Special two-year rate: U.S., $49; Canada, $53; foreign, $59. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

# What comes naturally

Perhaps the most startling thing about the Vatican's "Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation" was the reception it received. TV and radio trumpeted the list of condemnations. The *New York Times* gave the statement roughly the play it had given President Reagan's "comeback" speech the week before, and also published the entire text, sixty footnotes and all. If newspapers in other cities weren't quite so lavish with their space, they were generous nonetheless. So was the press in other countries.

Maybe it was a slow news day? Maybe the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith launched the document effectively with a news conference in Rome? None of that would have mattered if the media did not sense—and share—the culture's apprehension that our scientific and technological powers have slipped from social control and are bolting toward self-destruction. Particularly in the U.S., the demeaning spectacle of the Baby M trial has awakened the public to what a brave new concept in childbearing can do to fundamental human relationships. This is indeed a teaching moment—when a firm, persuasive, understanding word can find a receptive audience.

The "Instruction" certainly qualifies on the count of firmness. There is an old joke that sometimes takes the form of an exchange: "Will you say something Catholic?" "No." "Thanks." In this sense, the Vatican document appeared stereotypically "Catholic"—a long list of "no's." Well, there is a time to say no, and in regard to a number of items the "Instruction" surveyed, the time is none too soon. And admit it, in an age of qualifications, the defiantly negative character of the document probably accounted for some of the notice it received.

If the "Instruction" were merely to be a club with which to get the world's attention, it succeeded admirably. If, as one supposes, it was also meant to be an effective instrument for bringing the best of the church's wisdom and experience to bear on large and frightening problems, then it was a serious disappointment.

The Vatican's call for harnessing medical science to the service of human dignity is surely welcome, but its specific conclusions about how this must be done still rest on a narrow and controverted footing. It views morality as a matter of articulating laws, and these laws are found inscribed in the natural form of marital intercourse. The "Instruction" simply ignores or bowls over the objections that have been repeatedly raised against this line of reasoning. Those who are unconvinced, and they include a large proportion of believing and practicing Catholics, will remain unconvinced—and, worse, unaddressed. The language of the statement is often puzzling and obscure. "Personalist" phrases add an emotional veneer to the neo-scholastic framework; the combination seems forced and arbitrary. At a critical juncture in explaining why even married couples cannot avail themselves of in vitro



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fertilization and embryo transfer to overcome infertility, the "Instruction" concludes that such a reliance on doctors and biologists, rather than the couples' bodies alone, to conceive a child establishes a "domination of technology. . . . a relationship of domination." Why "domination"? Why not speak of the "service" of technology and a relationship of "service"? Had the Vatican's case been less peremptory and more persuasive on this single delicate point, the credibility of many of its other proscriptions would have been vastly reinforced.

More than clarity is wanting here. There is very little biblical reference—marriage, children, and science placed in relationship to the kingdom Jesus proclaimed. There is no consideration of the social context that might establish scientific, medical, and personal priorities in a world where millions of children are deprived of nourishment, both physical and parental. There is some expression of sympathy for the plight of infertile couples, but it comes late in the document. There is little sense of a church listening and learning as well as teaching, and no acknowledgment of ambiguities, uncertainties, and gray areas where people of good will may understandably have a hard time reaching agreement—a point of particular importance when the "Instruction" takes up the question of civil law. In what way, one must ask, does this statement differ from a statement that might have been written before Vatican II?

In one respect, the "Instruction" is quite up-to-date. It is scientifically well-informed. The distinctions it makes between different procedures, although sometimes indicated obliquely, are refined. Which raises a question. Why is the scientific advice the Vatican is receiving of a higher level than the theological and pastoral advice? Which raises another question. What exactly was the consultation process which shaped the statement? Years of researching and drafting are said to have gone into the document—yet behind closed doors and without discussion by the "People of God." Archbishop Alberto Bovone, secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, says that sixty-two moralists and theologians participated in this work; several of the leading Americans in this area were not consulted, nor do they know of colleagues who were. The views of a dozen bishops' conferences were said to have been solicited—which ones, and how much of their pastoral judgment is reflected in the product? Let us hazard a speculation: the Vatican's various litmus tests of doctrinal regularity are isolating it from much of the best theological thinking and soundest pastoral judgment in the church. Has the current stance of the Vatican led it to miss the opportunity of an exceptional, perhaps irrecoverable, teaching moment?

We raise these questions out of disappointment with the "Instruction," but not, we hope, out of quarrelsomeness. Many people, Catholic and non-Catholic, have been dismayed by recent Vatican actions, and that experience inevitably plays a part in the perception of a document like this one. But it would be a mistake simply to lump this statement with those other disagreements. The Vatican's general concern for defending humanity against the "excesses" of humanity's own powers is widely shared. Many of the Vatican's specific conclusions, including its defense of embryonic human life against experiment and destruction, are sound. And even if, despite the Vatican's protestation that it does not mean to rule out medical interventions on the grounds that they are "artificial," it still seems to be relying on a questionable notion of biological nature as a barrier against the Faustian drive of science and technology, then it is doing no more than much of the modern ecology movement.

Those who are dissatisfied with the Vatican "Instruction" are under the obligation to develop an alternative. Ad hoc ethics are not enough. If the undeniable desire for children of

many married but infertile couples seems to justify their resort to in vitro fertilization or artificial insemination, why should the equally felt desire of a single man or woman be of any less account? Morality (as well as civilization) means drawing lines. Drawing lines means saying "no" to some people's desires. Saying "no" means having reasons which, if not immediately compelling to those being somehow denied their hopes, at least can convince a majority capable of identifying with the losers' plight and willing to follow the same principle even if "the shoe were on the other foot." Secular thinkers in disagreement with the Vatican statement have their work cut out for them.

So do Catholics: "The precise indications which are offered in the present Instruction . . . are not meant to halt the effort of reflection but rather to give it a renewed impulse in unrenounceable fidelity to the teachings of the church." There may not be complete agreement among Catholics on the concrete meaning of that final phrase, but our view is that fidelity demands not only honest criticism of where and how this document has drawn lines but a willingness to submit a better way for mapping some of the most fateful journeys humanity has ever undertaken.

IMMIGRATION LAW

## FLEEING TO CANADA

### HOSPITALITY FURTHER NORTH

La Colle, Quebec. They are the "bus people." They come not from Vietnam. Nor from other points in Southeast Asia. Not even from the battle-scarred Middle East. They come from the United States. By bus from New York State and Vermont to this Canadian immigration post, a leisurely forty-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On March 9 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (6-3) that eligibility requirements for aliens seeking political asylum must be relaxed to comply with the intention of the 1980 Refugee Act. Rather than needing to prove "a clear probability" that they would face death, torture, or persecution by returning to their native countries, aliens now will be expected to show a "reasonable possibility" of persecution. This change may affect thousands of Central Americans who have come to the U.S., and could affect those entering Canada, some 4,000 since November 1986. THE EDITORS

five-minute drive from Montreal. The bus people, who fled their native El Salvador and Guatemala to find haven in the U.S., are once more on-the-run.

They come to Canada now, just one step ahead of American immigration authorities, whose aim is to crack down on all aliens who have begun to reside illegally in the States since January 1, 1982. From this date forward, under the new immigration law signed by President Reagan last November, all aliens who have entered the United States without valid documents face deportation.

It is here, at this New York State-Quebec border-crossing that this newest wave of desperate persons spin tales of hope, then suffering and tragedy. A twenty-six-year-old Salvadoran male, a salad-maker in a New York City restaurant, who has brought to Canada his common-law wife, five-month-old son, brother and brother-in-law, happily concedes that all was well till the immigration measure was put in place. "TV, furniture, stereo, we had it all," he tells a Canadian journalist. And then the law was passed and the dream of living a good life in the States was no more.

A former schoolteacher in Guatemala says she was willing to work in a jewelry store all her life, just to remain in America. The immigration measure abruptly changed the prospect. Suddenly, there was fear, all over again, that she would be sent back to the oppression of Guatemala.

Others tell similar stories, about working for a subminimum wage, hiding in the shadows of America, willing to run the risk of discovery by immigration agents. Now this illusion of survival is dashed.

The bus people are coming to Canada in ever-increasing numbers, it appears. Without visas, without passports, without any documentation at all. In November, just days following President Reagan's signature on the immigration act, the figure was 700. In December, more than 1100. By January, well over 1200. And the numbers will swell in the months ahead, Canadian officials believe.

The refugees say they were inspired by marvelous tales about Canada. A new home for the frightened and the dispossessed, it was said. Canada, was compassionate, and, unlike the United States would not return anyone from Central America.

They were told correctly. El Salvador and Guatemala have been among eighteen countries to which Canada does not deport people. Moreover, despite changes in the government's stance brought about by the flood of immigrants, the Canadian government is likely to grant most of the bus people one-year ministerial permits, which allow them to live and work in the country while their claims are analyzed. Canada pursues this humanitarian objective even as its refugee policy is under strain—severe strain. In the past eight months, some 16,000 refugee-claimants have sought entrance to Canada. First, they streamed in from Portugal, arguing they were Jehovah Witnesses and victims of persecution in their homeland. The allegation turned out to be a blatant falsehood. But the Portuguese were permitted to remain. Then, 155 Sri Lankans, drifting in lifeboats in the waters off Newfoundland, declared they too were victims of persecution, victims of the ongoing rebellion in their nation. Later, they admitted that they had lied. No matter, though, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney himself said it was better to err on the side of compassion. So the Sri Lankans have made Canada their new home.

During the past two months, the Turks have come. Nearly two-thousand flew into Montreal and Toronto, appealing for refugee status. By this time, the Canadian government and the public at large were aroused. It was obvious that most of the refugees were not escaping their homelands for religious, racial, or political reasons; they were desperate for economic advantage, seeking instant jobs, comfort, and happiness. So temporary procedures have been instituted requiring a preliminary hearing before refugees are allowed into Canada. Benoit Bouchard, the minister responsible for immigration, has been working out arrangements with U.S. authorities so that the refugee-claimants are not subject to deportation while they wait three or four weeks in border cities for their immigration hearings. Also Bouchard is promising new legislation aimed at winnowing out legitimate refugees from those pursuing economic goals. Bouchard submits: "I don't think Canadians are ready to close the door tomorrow morning. But what people don't accept is that those who are not refugees take advantage of a system to slip into a country like ours. They can abuse the system." So the government is planning new legislation on the dilemma, to be in place before Parliament adjourns for the summer. Refugees may no longer be able to stay in Canada for years while their cases are processed and decided.

But one pledge remains firm. There will be no compromise on Canada's humanitarian course. All persons fleeing persecution, as defined by the Geneva Convention on refugees, whether they are Central Americans escaping from the U.S., whether they come from behind the Iron Curtain or from the Middle East, whether they are from Asia or Africa, will be welcome in Canada. Just the other day a senior policy-making official was musing on the sudden turn of events: this new refugee flow from the United States. The official was in no mood to consider the political impact on relations between Ottawa and Washington. Instead, he chose to dwell on the legacy of the United States, what it means to the masses around the globe. The official observed: "When you think of the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

States, you think of the homeless looking up at the Statue of Liberty and the torch symbolizing hope. Refugees coming *from* America? Somehow it doesn't seem right."

EDMUND GRESS

*Edmund Gress is an American reporter working for the NBC Radio News Network. He has contributed to* The Baltimore Sun *and* The Atlanta Constitution, *among others.*

## SOUTH AFRICA

# SANCTIONS IN CONTEXT

## BISHOPS REAFFIRM SUPPORT

When the U.S. news media received word that a special commission of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) had some negative things to say about the effect of economic sanctions, they quickly took it up. The *Wall Street Journal* and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* – to mention two which I have seen — swiftly produced editorials. "Sanctions Backfire" headlined one; "Sanctions Reviewed," said the other.

First, the report is not a pronouncement by the SACBC: it was prepared by their special commission on economic pressures and submitted for the conference's consideration. The bishops discussed the report and decided that their prior statement on economic pressure need not be revised at the present time. What the bishops said in 1986 was:

> The system of apartheid has caused so much suffering and so much harm . . . and is now being defended, despite some reforms, with so much repressive violence, that the people have had to resort to the strongest possible forms of pressure to change the system. It seems that the most effective of nonviolent forms of pressure left is economic pressure. . . . We ourselves believe that economic pressure has been justifiably imposed to end apartheid . . . [that it] should continue and, if necessary, be intensified should . . . developments . . . show little hope of fundamental change.

The second important omission was the special commission's finding that there have been some positive effects from the sanctions heretofore invoked against South Africa. The new president of the SACBC, Bishop Wilfrid Napier, said that while the special commission found economic pressures to have been counterproductive as far as the government was concerned, such pressures were generally welcomed by "politicized and socialized" black people and had raised the consciousness of the business sector and the white community. Bishop Napier went on to say that the SACBC still subscribes to the view that economic pressure was justifiable and should continue, but should not destroy the country's economy and cause further suffering.

The journalistic interest in southern Africa is matched on Capitol Hill where several conflicting bills have been introduced. Congressman Bill McCollum (R-FL) has introduced a bill mandating disinvestment and an end to all trade with Angola. Representative Dannemeyer (R-CA) has a bill which would give $27 million in military aid to UNITA, the South African-sponsored rebel force in Angola. At the other end of the political spectrum, Mr. Owens (D-NY) has proposed a resolution asking the president to grant asylum to those individuals who seek asylum in the United States rather than serve in the South African armed forces in support of apartheid. Congressman Dymally (D-CA) wants to prohibit the importation of South African diamonds into the U.S., and has agreed to introduce specific legislation about Namibia, illegally occupied by South Africa for decades. Several other members — Dixon, Gray, Leland, and Wolpe — have introduced bills to give economic assistance to the front-line states, South Africa's neighbors, which are subject to devastating economic pressure by that aggressive, white-minority-dominated country.

With its conflicting ideologies, economic systems, races and tribes, the southern region of Africa approaches the legendary complexity of the Middle East. South Africa is the economic and military giant of the region; but under a "State of emergency" for nearly a year, both whites and blacks find themselves more than ever oppressed, with the government backtracking on promised reforms of the apartheid system. The protracted guerrilla war in Namibia has drained both human and financial resources. At the same time, led by the Namibian churches, the people there have been demanding independence with more vigor than ever.

The main problem, in the eyes of some American conservatives, is that South Africa's neighbors, Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe, have adopted a "Marxist-Leninist" ideology. Probably neither Marx nor Lenin would recognize their doctrine, were they to visit these countries which in reality are more pragmatic than doctrinaire. Whites who a few years ago fled Zimbabwe in fear of socialism are now returning, having seen that government moving only slowly to redistribute land and regulate the economy. The rulers of Angola have had no difficulty in working with the U.S. and European petroleum industries which provide most of their revenue. Mozambique has been making friendly noises about relations with the U.S.

The U.S., however, has been financing UNITA, a movement also backed by South Africa, to overthrow the government of Angola which is generally recognized as legitimate. South Africa has continued, despite commitments to the contrary, to support a similar rebel movement in Mozambique. Both rebel groups are smart enough to know that "anti-Communism" can get them a lot of support from the American right. The presence of Cuban troops in Angola is particularly provocative to such ideologues, who ignore the fact that, without the Cubans, South African forces might well have occupied the entire country. As it is, their repeated invasions and occupation have been confined to southern Angola, while the Cubans have remained largely in the north and occupied



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

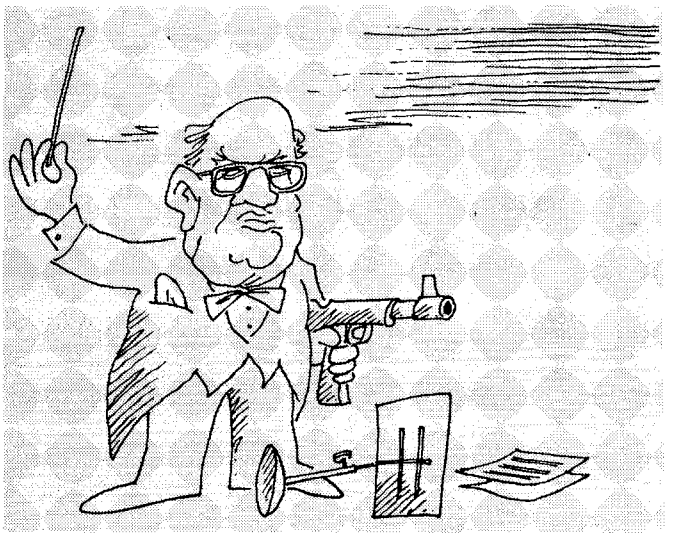
themselves with protecting American economic interests — the oil fields in the Cabinda enclave.

The recently released report of the secretary of state's Advisory Committee on South Africa, titled "A U.S. Policy toward South Africa," takes note of the contradictions in recent U.S. policy when it states that "efforts to build positive relationships with black leaders in South Africa have been significantly damaged by the failure to deliver a long promised settlement in Namibia and the decision to provide military support for Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola."

It is interesting to note that the Advisory Committee, composed of people whose political philosophy ranges from center to right, paid little attention to the sanctions issue. The Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 was taken for granted, and the Committee moved on to look to the future. Its recommendations in the field of education, community support, international cooperation, and other areas would redefine the U.S. role in southern Africa from its present focus on anti-Communism to a positive emphasis on the development of a future democratic, nonracial society in South Africa itself and the support of development in the neighboring countries.

These themes are touched on by some of the congressional proposals, too, but the administration continues to send mixed signals to the southern Africa region. Recently the U.S. vetoed a move in the United Nations to impose sanctions on South Africa which were virtually the same as those enacted by the U.S. Congress. That move came close to violating the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 which says (Sec. 401, a, 1): "It is the policy of the United States to seek international cooperation with the industrialized democracies on measures which will encourage an end to apartheid. The net economic effect of such cooperation should be at least equal to the net economic effect of the measures imposed by this Act." In light of this and other provisions, it is difficult to see any justification for vetoing a U.N. action which corresponded to the U.S. sanctions.

One hears, these days, many cries for the president to assert leadership in foreign affairs. One area which urgently needs his attention is southern Africa. The president should make it clear that the sanctions and other provisions of the 1986 Act are, in fact, being enforced. He should throw the weight of his influence against congressional attempts to provide support for the Savimbi forces in Angola and to levy sanctions against that country.



There is need for an immediate commitment to change in southern Africa: change from poverty and devastation in Angola and Mozambique to developmental projects; change toward a just society in South Africa. The Catholic bishops of the region have indicated that they still support economic pressure. The secretary of state's Advisory Committee in South Africa has pointed the way to steps which will increase the chances of a peaceful future for South Africa. The president would do well to accept and follow such advice.

ROLLINS E. LAMBERT

*Rev. Rollins E. Lambert is the advisor on African affairs to the United States Catholic Conference's Office of International Justice and Peace.*

AUSCHWITZ CONVENT

## LEARNING FROM HISTORY

RESOLUTION BY CATHOLICS & JEWS

On February 22, 1987 a Catholic delegation composed of the archbishops of Lyons, Paris, Brussels, and Cracow met outside Geneva with Jewish spokesmen. The outcome of the five-hour meeting was a joint communiqué, stating that the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz would be closed; the nuns would move to a new location, part of an interreligious center to be built about one mile from the camp.

This decision comes at the end of nearly two years of tension that had developed between Catholics and Jews (see "Contemplation and Controversy: Carmelite Monastery at Auschwitz," *Commonweal* June 20, 1986 and October 24, 1986). To Jews, the establishment of the convent in the place which, more than any other, has come to symbolize the murder of the Jewish people by the Nazis, was a denigration of Jewish suffering. Catholics, on the other hand, responded that the nuns' presence was appropriate, since millions of non-Jews, in particular Poles, also had been murdered at Auschwitz. The ensuing controversy threatened to strain the new relationship between Catholics and Jews that has been in the making since Vatican II.

A year ago Cardinal Macharski, in whose diocese of Cracow Auschwitz is situated, attempted to reassure Jews that the convent was intended only as a place of prayer and expiation. Soon afterward, upon the urging of Cardinal Lustiger of Paris, an international commission was established that included Jewish members, to consider the divisive issue. A first meeting took place last July in Geneva. In a joint statement it affirmed the special significance to Jews of Auschwitz-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Birkenau. The February 22 decision to move the convent is the result of continuing dialogue.

While some will disagree with the decision (some Jewish as well as Catholic voices have been heard in defense of the convent), it seems to me a welcome sign that the Catholic church is willing at long last to take into account Jewish self-understanding, and to learn from one of history's harshest lessons. At the same time, there is movement among Jews as well. The recent international conference, sponsored by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, on "Other Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis," held in Washington February 23-25, is an important step toward giving greater recognition to non-Jews murdered by the Nazis. Together with the Geneva meeting both events lead one to hope that, forty-five years after one of history's greatest evils, Jews and non-Jews are capable of a new willingness to listen to each other.

EVA FLEISCHNER

*Eva Fleischner, who has written widely on Judaism and Christianity, discussed the Auschwitz Carmelite convent in* Commonweal *last June.*

**OF SEVERAL MINDS** John Garvey

# FIDELITY & FAULTLINES

## MARRIAGE IN A RADICAL CONTEXT

As I sat down to write the first draft of this column about marriage and the pressures arrayed against it in our culture, a friend called to tell me that his marriage was breaking up. I should say another friend, because it has happened before. It was never timed to coincide with my writing before, though, and it occurred to me that if there is some cause-and-effect thing working under the surface of reality, something that at magic moments connects some parts of reality with the writing and thinking of other people (like columnists), it was a good thing I hadn't chosen to write about nuclear war.

I do think some divorces should happen. No one should keep a family together at all costs, if for example it means staying with a wife-beater or child-abuser, and I know people who were raised by parents who hated one another and stayed together for the sake of the children. Their staying together left more scars, the psychological equivalent of freezer-burn, than divorce would have caused.

There was a time when divorce was popularly seen as the luxury of the rich and famous, a form of serial marriage undertaken for kicks by frivolous and hard-hearted people. Most of the divorces I've seen don't fit that description. The people involved are decent, often confused by what they are going through, and they are frequently bitter and angry. They seldom feel that they have arrived at the point of divorce through any series of conscious choices; what becomes divorce in the end has happened to them, like bad weather or bad fortune, and feels terribly unfair. In other cases — usually the case of the partner who initiates the divorce — there is a state of mind which combines nearly giddy feelings of freedom and liberation with the feeling of being flayed alive.

I've been married for twenty years, and it took me about ten years even to begin to know what marriage means, another five to take the lessons to heart. I'm probably a slower learner than most, but I have learned that learning is part of it, and learning means accepting some painful things about the self, ego, about knowing another and being known by another.

A friend who taught me a lot once said something about marriage which shocked me. "I think arranged marriages could probably work better than the arrangement our culture encourages," he said. When I expressed some surprise at what is certainly a minority view, he agreed that arranged marriages are bloodless, calculated, and insensitive to the deepest needs of the people involved. "But at least," he said, "they make it clear that you have to learn how to love, that love is an act of the will."

He is right about that much, I think, and I wonder if anything in our culture helps us to see that. What we find is usually the opposite view, the notion that feelings ought to dominate our approach to life. This is the wormiest fruit romanticism has to offer. The satisfaction of desire is not only not happiness; it can be a distraction which will make happiness unlikely and joy — which matters much more — impossible. (Someone literary will tell me that romanticism at its best pointed to the tragic nature of the obsession with feelings; but we are meant to find the moth-doomed-to-the-flame heroes and heroines of romance interesting and tragic, rather than comic. It is an interest I am constitutionally incapable of sharing.)

It is a plain fact of marriage and the love it involves that the infatuation which may have brought you there comes and goes. There are waves of appreciation, and there are barren times. At the same time, it is possible to become infatuated with someone you aren't married to. This is, to say the least, not an easy situation; but it happens all the time — at one time or another to nearly every married person.

Where feelings are allowed to matter more than vows, shared obligation, and the willingness to love (which is not always a feeling of profound emotion) marriages aren't likely to last. No marriage should exist as a cold contract, but our feelings themselves need transformation and questioning. They are not, by themselves, reliable guides. This is true not only at the most obvious levels — lust, wild infatuation, obsession — but also at more subtle ones, like common irritation, the desire to consider your time



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your own, and the thought of your life as a possession which you have a right to take in a direction which satisfies you.

One of the problems we face may have come about with a view of marriage as a matter which involves law and contractual obligation, rather than a covenant. A covenant is something deeper; it involves feelings, and should, but it transcends them, while including them. A contract, compared with any depth of feeling, is a small, cold thing. A covenant involves vows and obligations which may include my feeling, sometimes will not (depending on the moment in my marriage), but in any case will not be defined by feeling.

Where feelings take a determining role in the decisions we make, we are likely to find ourselves impatient with marriage, not least because we become uncomfortably aware that our wives and husbands know us, in some important ways, better than we know ourselves. We love it when our strengths and talents are known, but tend to squirm when our weaknesses, insecurities, and insensitivities are known just as clearly. What makes marriage a grace-filled thing is that despite all of this, the other loves us as we are. It can be difficult to accept a gift we know we can't earn, don't deserve, and too frequently fail to appreciate.

That may be why some people, after years of marriage, are inclined to divorce. It is more comfortable, and much more satisfying, for a man to leave a wife who knows him, sins and all, for a woman who knows him so little that her picture of him corresponds remarkably with the picture he wants to have of himself.

There are obviously much more complex reasons for many divorces than this, and it is difficult to see how a marriage can continue if one of the partners has absolutely given up on it. And it is obvious that counseling is essential for many couples. Depending on the sensitivity and discernment of the counselor, it can even, occasionally, help. We have all seen couples we know, in situations which ordinarily would destroy a marriage, struggle back together; their gratitude for what they have is stronger than that of many couples who have never had to work at marriage in so strenuous a way. To struggle this way, though, goes against a strong current. The individualism of our culture, the assumption that happiness lies in the satisfaction of desire, the unwillingness to question desire itself, all stand in the way of an appreciation of the sacramental nature of marriage.

I think it can be argued that marriage requires a certain asceticism and detachment. The Fathers of the church used the word *apatheia*, which has become our "apathy" but is not quite the same thing. There is a reference in the Fathers to "the fire of *apatheia*," and the detachment recommended has more to do with the ability to see things as they are, disconnected from what we imagine to be our need for them. Some of this is needed in marriage (in friendship, too); it is far from coldness.

It could be that in time marriage seen as a sacrament, and lived as if it were a mystery of grace, will become nearly as radical a choice as monasticism, a counter-cultural thing. Maybe it is already, understood properly.

In any case, these are hard times for people who want marriage to work. When friends who seemed happily married divorce after years of marriage, you become keenly aware of all the faultlines and shaky places in your own life together. One friend, still married but scared like the rest of us, put it fairly well. It's like being in a forest at night by a good fire in a clearing, but the wolf-howls are getting closer.

## WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

# PRINCIPLES & POLITICS

## DIFFERING WITH DULLES

Avery Dulles, S.J., holds a special place in the community of Catholic theologians in the United States. Perhaps the adjective which best defines Dulles's reputation is balance — balanced judgment which is the product of comprehensive reading, careful testing of views, and charitable statement of differences.

A recent paper by Fr. Dulles which has received wide notice in the Catholic press will contribute to his reputation as a balanced observer of the Catholic community. The thirty-page essay ("Gospel, Church, and Politics") was delivered at a meeting of the Rockford Institute's Center on Religion and Society in January. In it Dulles intends "to present a constructive Catholic position" on the relationship of the temporal and eternal aspects of life. His goal is "to show the legitimacy of the church's concern for social order while at the same time cautioning against the politicization of religion." The full text is now available in *Origins* (February 19, 1987), and merits careful reading and response.

The address stretched from biblical exegesis (the teaching of Jesus and the social ethic of the New Testament) to commentary on magisterial social teaching (from Leo XIII to John Paul II) to an analysis of the role of the U.S. bishops, as teachers and pastors, in issuing the pastoral letters on peace and the economy of 1983 and 1986.

Dulles's review of the biblical data, theological tradition, and papal teaching provides no comfort to anyone seeking to restrict the church's ministry to procla-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mation and sacramental ministry, relegating social responsibility to a secular function, beyond the substance of the Gospel or the scope of the church's ministry. At the same time, the guiding motif of Dulles's paper is "to insist on the utter transcendence of the Kingdom," and to prevent "the politicization of religion." It is impossible to stand in the Catholic social tradition and disagree with these two goals. While standing with him on both, I depart from him on a major theme of his address.

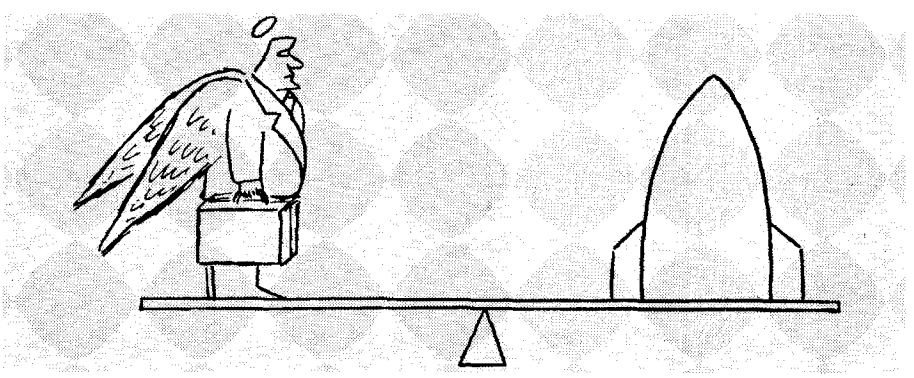
The issue, as stated by Dulles, is whether the bishops "ought to give detailed answers in controverted areas such as nuclear policy, taxation, welfare programs, and the like." Essentially, Dulles proposes a utilization calculus for deciding the question. He wishes to examine "the price of such specificity," and he finds the price too high. The mode of inquiry is itself important to note, for counting costs inevitably means that we are in the realm of contingent choice. Dulles makes no claim that this question of episcopal specificity can be decided with finality. Hence, how one calculates the costs is the essence of the debate.

In my view there are two distinct steps in counting the costs of specificity. The first involves the nature of moral argument; the second, the role of religious leadership on social questions.

It is clear that one function of moral teaching is to specify values and principles, duties and rights that the ecclesial and human community can use to assess social issues. It is equally clear, I believe, that a social ethic stated at this level of generality will fail to engage the issues it must address. This point was made precisely by the late John Courtney Murray in a famous article on warfare in 1959: "Power can be invested with a sense of direction only by moral principles . . . But moral principles cannot effectively impart this sense of direction to power until they have first, as it were, passed through the order of politics; that is until they have first become incarnate in public policy. It is public policy in all varied concretions that must be 'moralized' . . ."

Murray points toward a basic fact: in social policy, principles in isolation from the intrinsic complexity of the issues provide little sense of direction, less guidance, and no capacity to cut into the density of socio-political discourse where decisions with significant moral content are made — often without explicit moral testing.

This methodological claim I am making is related to the question of religious leadership and how Fr. Dulles counts the costs against episcopal specificity. In writing the pastorals "the bishops make an enormous investment of time and energy in questions that are also being dealt with, from a similar perspective, by a variety of foundations, public interest groups, and educational institutions." This statement is open to empirical testing, and my sense is that Fr. Dulles's view of the secular debate on these topics is mistaken. Other groups do debate the issues; the *disciplined, systematic moral* argument is often absent. Certainly if one uses the standard literature of the nuclear debate for the past thirty years it could not be demonstrated that a variety of groups and institutions had made the moral assessment of strategic policy a central theme. To come closer to home, if one reviewed the major Catholic theological journals from the time of Fr. Murray's 1959 essay on warfare through 1980 when the bishops began their work, the amount of writing devoted to the ethics of nuclear policy is embarrassingly scant (I count two articles in *Theological Studies* from 1959-1980). The strategic literature and the theological literature of the 1980s is markedly different — it is filled with moral analysis. It would be presumptuous and plainly mistaken to argue that the peace pastoral generated the new debate. It would also be mistaken not to note how often it is used in the arguments of other analysts.



Fr. Dulles finds the time devoted to specifics on the pastorals misspent in light of other responsibilities which bishops have. But if nuclear war and equity in the economy are regarded as significant moral issues, and if the moral argument does not hold a central place in the national debate, why are the bishops acting either imprudently or inefficiently when they invest time and effort to catalyze the wider moral debate?

Fr. Dulles's response goes to a second criticism he makes of episcopal specificity, touching again on the religious leadership of the bishops. "When the bishops devote so much attention to worldly affairs they can unwittingly give the impression that what is truly important in their eyes is not the faith or holiness that leads to everlasting life but rather the structuring of human society . . ." The division drawn here between "worldly affairs" and faith seems too sharp in light of Vatican II's statement in *Gaudium et Spes:* "While earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's Kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God." To stress worldly affairs as *part of* the pursuit of holiness is a main theme of the pastorals.

The distinct role of the laity in grappling with the specifics of the "vital concern of the Kingdom" is one of Fr. Dulles's major points. Here, too, I stand with him; where we divide is on how the costs should be counted when the episcopal teaching role fails to engage the specific places where justice is done and peace preserved. There are high costs to silence also.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# DIVORCED FROM EXPERIENCE

## RETHINKING THE THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

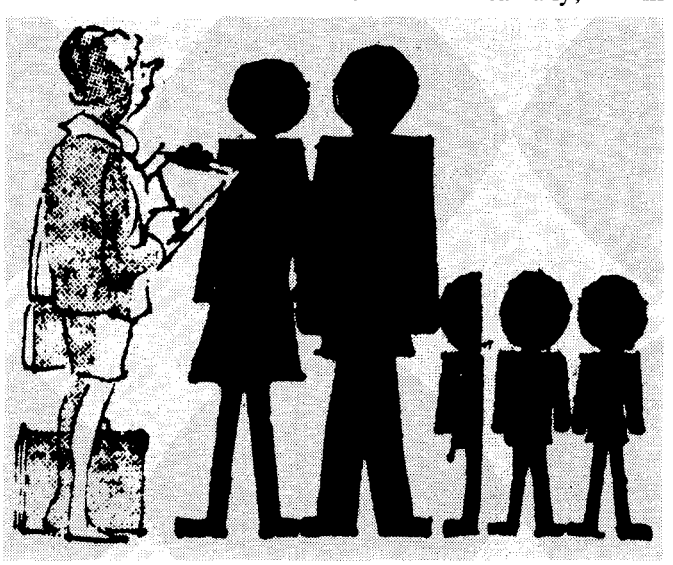
LISA SOWLE CAHILL

It is clear to many in the church today that a new beginning point in the experience of married persons is needed in the Catholic theology and ethics of marriage. This is not because the celibate clergy who have in the tradition made the most extensive contributions to a normative understanding of marriage are incapable of insights into an experience they do not share directly. A degree of distance from an experience can in fact assist appropriate analysis. But since interpretation given by those outside a particular experience must rely on analogy to similar but different experiences, it seems difficult to deny that the testimony of married persons should have a prerogative in normative evaluations which has not been granted thus far. Before we can give the experience of marriage its due weight, it will be necessary to consider why this move is important, and why beginning with experience is not as simple a task as it might first appear.

First of all, experience is an important resource for Christian ethics in all areas but it is not the only source in any area. A Christian perspective on any moral issue derives from the interaction of a number of insights, which originate in at least four basic reference points or sources. These are Scripture, tradition, philosophy, and descriptive or empirical information about human persons and communities.

These sources are not separate, though they are somewhat distinct from one another. For instance, the collection of biblical literature already represents within itself several different strands of religious tradition, which evolved within faith communities over hundreds of years. In addition, when we read the words of Scripture today, we bring to them our own religious concepts and images, which will be in some ways the same as and in some ways different from those of the communities who originally produced the biblical witness. Tradition, as another source, includes not only authoritative church teachings, but also the faith and practice of the whole believing community more broadly understood. Philosophies of course can vary, and Christianity has borrowed from many over the centuries. The philosophy most central in Catholicism has been the "natural law" method which Thomas Aquinas developed from Aristotle. To speak of the natural law is to presuppose that there are some basic human moral values which are shared by all persons, no matter what their cultural or religious heritage. Last, but in a sense most fundamental, is experience. This reality can be described in many ways, such as the personal story, or, in a more scientific manner, through biology, sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

Although ideally all four major sources should be influential in Christian ethics, it is usually the case that our attention is focused explicitly on one or two, while the influence of the others becomes for a time less direct. Eventually, it will



LISA SOWLE CAHILL, *a professor of theology at Boston College, is editor for ethics for* Religious Studies Review *and associate editor of* Logos *and the* Journal of Religious Ethics. *She serves on the Board of Directors for the Society of Christian Ethics and on the Institutional Review Board of the Harvard Community Health Plan. She is the author of* Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality. *The above article is excerpted from the book,* Commitment to Partnership: Explorations of the Theology of Marriage, *edited by William P. Roberts, to be published by Paulist Press in May.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

become necessary to shift the focus of attention so as to take into account the influence of sources and insights which may have been neglected. Today, this is the case with experience. In the past, Catholic teachings about sexuality and marriage have been based mostly on the natural law. In turn, what the natural law is said to require is determined in a context of great reliance on past teachings of the church. Scripture and experience (including social-scientific studies) have been understood largely as supports for the natural law tradition. The task for Catholic Christian ethics today is to bring its interpretation of the human and Christian values which marriage represents back into fruitful contact with the actual lives of married persons.

To achieve this new beginning may be a complicated project. In the first place, "experience" is never "pure" and unmediated. For experience to have meaning and significance at all, it must be interpreted; that is, it must be received and appropriated in categories of value that provide intelligibility both to those who participate in the experience and those to whom the experience is communicated. In the case of marriage, there is already a strong normative tradition in Catholicism which provides such categories: monogamy, indissolubility, inseparability of procreation and sexual acts, the dangerous quality of sexual pleasure, to name a few.

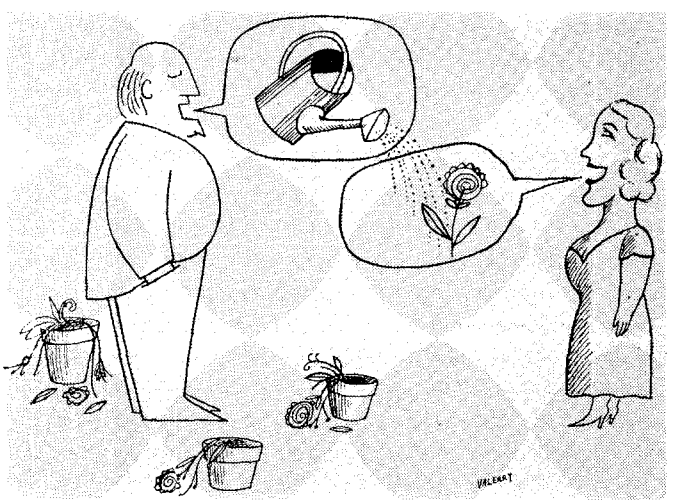
For experience to serve as a beginning point will require not that all categories be set aside, for that is impossible (without categories there is no understanding), but that categories be truly exposed to a critical movement between the theological traditions they represent and the *de facto* relationships which they supposedly explain. This means that honest reflection on the experience of marriage cannot begin with an a priori commitment to render the traditional categories in more or less the traditional ways when all is said and done. To do this would be to short-circuit the mutually revelatory dialectic between theology and experience.

Even after the critical dialectic between experience and categories is recognized, difficulties remain. The fact that the experience of everyone is not the same seems true in a special way for marriage. Even more prominently than it is a personal and sexual relationship, marriage is a social institution. It is undergirded by, and opens out to, family and society in ways which can vary drastically with culture and era, and which impinge radically on the nature of the relations between wife and husband, parents and children, and sisters and brothers. It might not be going too far to say that the institutionalization of marriage determines these relationships. An intimate interpersonal relation of equal affection and responsibility between spouses is not possible in a culture in which both men and women see husband as the superior, controlling partner. The "experience" of marriage never can be severed from the particular social, religious, and moral milieu in which it arises. This is not to say there are no "constants" in the experience of marriage. It is rather to call for another continual, mutually critical dialogue, this time among cultures past and present. Only on the basis of the dialogues between theology and experience, and among the complex, varied experiences of individuals and of groups, can we understand the reality of Christian marriage and rearticulate that reality in categories which are more descriptively accurate and more helpful in evaluating marriage's successes and failures.

Two aspects of marriage can be contrasted: the interpersonal and social. The importance of each can be substantiated by any one of the four sources of ethics, and is reinforced by the experience of the married and their families. Although both aspects are essential to marriage, the aspects which a thinker, group, or culture takes to be primary can color the analysis of marriage in decisive ways.

In more traditional societies, marriages tend to be seen as links within a larger family structure, in whose framework they have meaning and which they perpetuate. The social, economic, and especially procreative contributions of the spouses to this larger, encompassing order are paramount. In turn, the family sustains marital relationships, with economic, psychological, and even procreative support. The practice of levirate marriage in ancient Israel (Gen. 38:8; Dt. 25:5-10) is an example of this interdependence, as are marriage customs in some twentieth-century "pre-industrial" societies. At the 1980 Synod on the Family, the bishops from Zaire reported: "The importance which is attached to the marital bond by the family is evident from the care with which the family group prepares for and progressively works out its institution." To cement or dissolve the marriage is not the decision of the couple alone, but a decision in which both families have considerable economic and social stakes. Since family structures in pre-modern societies are distinctively patriarchal, family-oriented marriages typically are patriarchal also, even allowing for quite variable influence of women within those structures (cf. Prov. 31:3-31).

The most influential author in post-Reformation Catholic thought, Thomas Aquinas, takes a solidly communal view of marriage. Even while he follows tradition and his culture in subordinating the wife to the husband, he does achieve some original insights into the quality of their relation as "friendship." This friendship is intensified by sexual expression and





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has a highly personal quality. Nonetheless, the primary purpose of sex is to serve the human community through procreation, and the primary definition of marriage is as domestic and social partnership, rather than interpersonal fulfillment.

An alternative approach to marriage is to take as its paramount meaning the relation between the two spouses, especially its sexual expression. While the social implications of this relation hardly go unrecognized, it is the union of the two partners which forms the basis or "bottom line" of the theological and moral evaluation of marriage. Examples are Augustine's preoccupation with the problematic nature of sexual acts and their justification within marriage; Roman Catholic Canon Law with its stress on consent and consummation; the predilection of modern papal teaching to focus on the ostensibly "natural" meanings of sexual intercourse and to identify these with the purposes of marriage; and some recent Roman Catholic writings about marriage which elaborate its "sacramentality" in terms of the love union of the couple, culminating in sexual intercourse.

Most Western Christians today take it for granted that the individuality of neither wife nor husband, nor their intimate relationship, ought to be subordinated almost entirely to the interests of family, tribe, or nation. What is not so clearly a part of the Western consciousness is the degree to which a "marriage" is a nexus of interdependent relations among couple, family, and larger social arrangements. We tend to idealize and isolate the couple in their love, their freedom, and their responsibility, and so to arrive at an unrealistic or simplistic view of the many elements which constitute a marriage, contributing to its success or failure.

As a focus for my discussion of contemporary Catholic views of marriage, I will take the thought of the present pope as expressed especially in his "Apostolic Exhortation on the Family" (*Familiaris Consortio,* 1981), and in some of his general audience talks on "The Theology of the Body" (1979-81). This will not be a comprehensive study, but will briefly illustrate the direction of the thought of John Paul II by means of his phrase "the nuptial meaning of the body." This phrase occurs during a commentary on the exclamation of Adam, "This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). John Paul's thesis is that the statement expresses the man's recognition of the woman's human identity, manifested bodily not only as "femininity" but also as "the reciprocity and communion of persons" which sexual difference makes possible. This is said to be substantiated by the fact that the following verse "establishes their conjugal unity" (Gen. 2:24: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh"), and that it is testified that they are naked before one another without shame (Gen. 2:25). The "nuptial meaning of the body" so disclosed is "the fundamental element of human existence in the world," and consists in the fact that "a creature God willed for its own sake . . . can fully discover its true self only in a sincere giving of self" (*Original Unity of Man and Woman,* Daughters of St. Paul, 1981). The pope, conflating the creation stories in the first two chapters of Genesis, tells his audience that, moreover,

> Genesis 2:24 speaks of the finality of man's masculinity and femininity, in the life of the spouses-parents. Uniting with each other so closely as to become "one flesh," they will subject, in a way, their humanity to the blessing of fertility, namely, "procreation," of which the first narrative speaks (Gen. 1:28).

There are several undoubtedly positive things to be said about John Paul's exposition of these texts. The first is that he attempts to engage the Roman Catholic view of marriage with relevant biblical accounts, and to recover elements which are more distinctively "Christian" than the standard "natural law" analysis of the "ends" of marriage and of sexual acts. Second, he portrays the sexuality of the man and the woman as enabling a mutual relation of self-donation. The affirmative and egalitarian tone of the portrayal sets it apart from virtually all official Catholic statements before the Second Vatican Council. Third, the influence of "personalist" philosophy on the pope's approach allows him to introduce into the ethics of sex and marriage the importance of the intersubjective relation of the spouses, and also to portray this relation in terms of high interpersonal ideals, which open onto the Christian ideal of self-offering love. Finally, the pope transforms the traditional Roman Catholic reading of the "nature" of sexuality so that it not only includes both physical and psychological aspects, but also integrally relates the two aspects in the "nuptial" meaning of sexual acts. The person is embodied as a sexual being in whom physical and spiritual aspects coalesce in interaction with another.

Now for the problems. Most Catholics, including John Paul II, have not worked out adequately the relation of biblical evidence to traditional theological and moral commitments. The fact that Catholic thinkers are not always well informed regarding critical historical studies of the texts they desire to use has not assisted the process. I will mention just three of the things such studies may indicate about the texts in question. First, the personalist language of "mutual self-gift" and "total surrender" of spouses through sexual union does not fit comfortably into Israelite views of marriage, nor even into the Genesis creation stories, though the latter are quite exceptional in the originally equal status given to the woman, and in the importance given to the couple as distinct from the family. It might be better, though, to speak of the "unity" of the couple, or even the "equality" of spouses, than of the intersubjective "gift" which John Paul II wants to associate with the body's "nuptial" meaning. It is easier to get intersubjectivity out of personalist philosophy than out of the biblical accounts. Secondly, neither the first nor the second creation story speaks of the institution of "marriage" as such, and certainly not of any "sacramental" marriage. Finally, the "one flesh" unity of Genesis 2 is proposed in the context more of a social partnership than of a procreative one. The "blessing of increase" in Genesis 1:28 ("Be fruitful . . .") is not directly associated with the "one flesh" unity (Gen. 2:23-24) of two equal partners



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who are interpersonally committed to one another, but with the responsibility of each species to perpetuate its own kind. I do not mean to suggest that any theological interpretation is wrong if it goes beyond demonstrably "biblical" views, but rather to call for more explicit and nuanced development of the method or means by which one moves from biblical "evidence" to a contemporary interpretation, and for the justification of such means.

Another difficulty is whether the biblical ideals, or even the pope's extrapolation of a "nuptial" significance of the body, really yields the norm that every authentically loving sexual union also will be procreative. In this interpretation the temptation to read the experience so as to fit the already standard categories is not entirely withstood. More serious dialogue with married persons about the relation of having children to their conjugal commitment and to their sex lives (especially "each and every act"!) is in order. Denise Lardner Carmody remarks on a "questionable — even unseemly — tendency" of the pope to interpret the experience of married women (and men) rather than letting them speak for themselves. We shall return to this dialogue below.

Last but not least — indeed the thing that most strikes me about the pope's development of "the nuptial meaning of the body" — is its isolation from the social conditions necessary for its realization, especially the structure and social location of the family, and the roles of women within the family.

A telling point in the papal view is his discussion of "fecundity." In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II develops the meanings of marriage and of parenthood. The decision to marry is described in quite ideal terms: it is a decision of the partners "to commit by their irrevocable conjugal consent their whole lives in indissoluble love and unconditional fidelity" (n. 68). "Manipulation" of sexual "communion" through contraception is said to be excluded by this love and fidelity (n. 32). The family, paralleling the couple, is also said to be an "intimate community of life and love" (n. 50) which builds up "the kingdom of God" (n. 49) through "generous fruitfulness," "solidarity and faithfulness," and by working together in a "loving way" (n. 50).

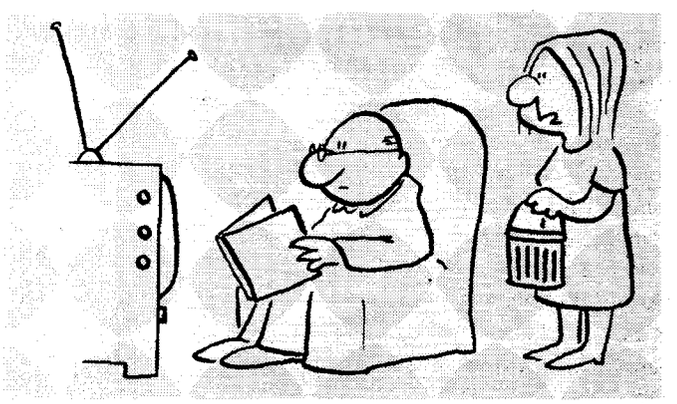
What is meant by this concretely? I cannot help but wonder whether the pope's ideal is not accompanied by rather traditional views of gender roles in marriage and family, in which the woman is in the home ready to welcome new life whenever it might appear, and to nurture both children and husband through whatever hard times the world "outside" the family presents to its "interior" life.

To the pope's credit, at least in my view, he explicitly links "the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men" to "reciprocal self-giving" in marriage and family (n. 22). He also claims that "woman's access to public functions" is "fully" justified. Some ambivalence about this claim, though, may be revealed in the qualification which follows it: "On the other hand the true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public roles and all other professions" (n. 23). With regard to this text, in *The 1980 Synod of Bishops*, (Leuven University Press, 1983), Jan Grootaers and Joseph A. Selling, Christian husbands as well as theologians, comment:

> John Paul is definitely more in favor of married women remaining in the home. Again, no one will dispute the fact that women who do devote themselves full time to child care are performing a task and following a profession on an equal footing with other professions. However, this is not really the issue. There is a much deeper question of role identification and human classification which has always managed to keep women "in their place" and substantiate genuine discrimination and prejudice against them.

There remains a tension in contemporary Catholic teaching as represented by John Paul II between traditional (patriarchal) views of women, family, and marriage, and a budding awareness that these views have had oppressive consequences for both women and men. At one level, the theoretical, equality is endorsed. But at the *practical* level, the conditions and consequences of true, effective equality are not followed out or perhaps even recognized. Some theologians find this depiction less than convincing. They draw on the human and social sciences for improved understandings of the actual situations of married persons and families, and not infrequently provide or rely on feminist critiques of traditional family and marriage. Attention to more equal roles is a *sine qua non* of credibility in twentieth-century Western theology.

In an especially perceptive essay exploring the shifting social context of Christian family life, Lorenz Wachinger (*Stimmen der Zeit*, 203, 1984), highlights seven factors: longer average duration of marriage, calling for more numerous adjustments over the life cycle; rising rates of divorce, especially as initiated by women; sexual liberalization; equal rights and educational and career opportunities for women, making them less dependent; personalization of marriage, involving greater emotional dependence between spouses; marriage and family as a private realm; added emphasis on communication and conflict resolution. Critiques by Catholic feminists such as Rosemary Radford Ruether are even more pointed. Writing in *Blackfriars* (May 1985), Ruether sees the modern Western family to be in a state of crisis created by



*"You've seen the movie, you've read the book, now take out the garbage."*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patriarchy and industrialism. In alliance with an "exploitative profit economy" is "a schizophrenic culture that divides home and work into separate spheres, segregates women as primary parents in a privatized domestic culture and alienates the male as worker from co-parenting." Ruether calls for a "realignment" of home and work, family and society which would allow both sexes full participation in both public and domestic spheres. Such a restructuring would, however, call for significant cultural shifts such as the serious commitment of resources to parenting by both men and women (including appropriate levels of outside child care). The church is invoked in support of a "Christian vision of the redeemed society as a new community of equals," and in the creation of "a new understanding of family as committed communities of mutual service."

Over and above the question of the appropriate reading of the *social conditions* permitting conjugal equality and commitment in marriage is that of the true reading of the *conjugal relationship* itself, especially in its sexual expression. As we have seen, the psychological dimensions of this relationship are related to contextual factors in family and society.

Yet the contributions of experiential accounts to the theology and ethics of marriage enter not only at the social level, but also at the level of the conjugal relation between two committed individuals.

As I have indicated, recent Roman Catholic teaching tends to portray this relation in idealized, even romanticized terms, to focus disproportionately on sexual intercourse as the epitome of the spousal partnership, to focus on sexual relations in discussions of marital morality, and to delimit the moral boundaries of sexual relations in a manner which is derived directly from past church teaching, which does not seem seriously open to reevaluation in the light of marital experience, and which seems to presuppose fairly traditional, patriarchal views of women and family. At this point we enter into the critical dialectic between categories and experience. In my judgment, at this time in the history of the Catholic tradition of sexuality and marriage, it is important to concentrate on the discernment of areas of experience to which these categories have not drawn our attention or from which they have distracted us.

One example of an attempt to do this is the work of Mary Durkin, who is committed both to working critically within the recent papal tradition as expressive of important religious values, and to "a better understanding of the lived experience of marital intimacy" accomplished through "the ongoing experience of various individuals and groups" (*The Changing Family*, Loyola University Press, 1982). An important effort in the development of such an understanding was Durkin's participation in a two-year colloquium among social scientists and theologians. The colloquium attempted to let the "life wisdom of the participants and the perspectives of the social sciences" speak before theological categories and evaluations "moved in." The result was a cyclical interpretation of marital intimacy, a view of marital intimacy as paradigmatic for other intimacy relationships, and a commitment to a sacramental understanding of marriage as revealing the mystery of the divine presence. The cycles named may not fit the experience of every married couple but they are tied in concrete, commonsense ways to the role of sexual attraction in evoking opportunities for intimacy, to the many barriers great and small which deter all married persons at least some of the time from total intimacy, to the reality and even probability of marital discord, dissatisfaction, or boredom, and to the possibility of making a difficult relationship better if the partners use imagination and try to maximize any positive experiences still remaining in their relationship. The cycles are described as "the falling in love of courtship and early marriage," "the settling down of the early years," "the painful bottoming out due to surface harmony," and "the beginning again of recapturing the beginnings and moving upward, reborn and renewed" (*Marital Intimacy: A Catholic Perspective*, Loyola University Press, 1980).

The authors do not deny that it is in fact possible for some marriages to fail, or that some marriages may be so destructive for one or both partners that to end them is better than to continue. They do resist the tendency to dissolve a relationship because it has come upon hard times, or because it becomes apparent that it does not measure up to the ideal for which the couple may have hoped. They urge spouses to build on the commitment they have made, and to seek actively opportunities for making their relation a more satisfying one. The morality of particular sexual acts deliberately was not a focus for the group. The theme throughout was "a vision of healthy marital sexual intimacy" which allowed a "sexual scenario" individual to the love of each couple, and not prescribed by the equally rigid codes of the "old" or of the "new" morality.

Durkin herself has developed this vision in more specific ways in the form of a response to John Paul's "Theology of the Body." In *Feast of Love* (Loyola University Press, 1983) she ties the papal ideals more closely to experience. For one thing, though endorsing the pope's affirmation of marriage and sexuality, she is much more attentive to the difficulties couples must surmount to realize these relations positively. In regard to the "nuptial meaning of the body" she observes that many persons do not have a sense of self-worth about their bodies or their sexual identities; are ignorant about their own bodily responses and needs or cannot communicate them to their partners; are physically and emotionally lazy about the effort required to maintain intimacy; or, at least sometimes, want to retain "control" through solitude more than they want to share in a "communion of persons."

Durkin does see parenthood as an important part of marriage but sets it in the larger context of a "generativity" which extends beyond the parenting role. Although she thinks that "a bodily act that leads to reproduction is part of an ongoing commitment to form a union that will reflect the glory of God," she warns nevertheless that because of the historical need for reproduction, "we have tended to overemphasize the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reproductive aspects of sexuality and, consequently, we have subjected our sexuality to criteria that judge how it influences reproduction." She also has stated that the assertion of a moral difference between artificial and natural methods of regulating birth and "the claim that contraception contradicts the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife" " do not seem to relate to the actual experiences of many people." Indeed, more needed in the marital experience of many is encouragement to *nurture* their sexual attraction, rather than to control and restrain it.

To be noted also and commended is the contribution of David M. Thomas in his recent book, *Christian Marriage* (Michael Glazier, 1983). Thomas places emphasis on distinctively Christian values: the importance of humility in defining marriage, and of the cross, forgiveness, and even will power in living it out successfully. He too sees marital sex as integrally related to having children, but relates it more basically to the commitment of wife and husband to each other, and avoids the temptations to overinterpret the significance of sexual acts as the occasions on which the relationship as a whole is at its peak moments. (A well-intentioned study which, to my eye, goes too far in this direction is Gallagher *et al., Embodied in Love*[Crossroad, 1983]. Is it really true that "the divine life" is revealed in marriage most of all in orgasm [p. 32]? Or is it in the faithful partnership, the journey through good times and bad, which is the ensemble of all marital acts and not just sexual ones? Is it true to experience to say that "sexual passion . . . must be the total aura and context of the life of the spouses" [p. 41]? Can it possibly be true that "every encounter between [any] two persons, even a simple 'Good Morning,' . . . must be sexual and passionate"[p. 119]?) Thomas is perhaps more consistent with recent suggestions of moral theologians and canonists that *love* is the basic meaning and "end" of marriage, even though marital love has sex as its expression and children as its outcome.

> n pursuit of better understanding of the essential character of Christian marriage, I would like to venture a definition of marital "love." The love which belongs in marriage is a *commitment to partnership*, that is a *commitment to achieve* social and domestic cooperation, mutual and equal respect, understanding and support, permanent fidelity, and the forgiveness which will be necessary to go beyond the inevitable failures in the realization of these ideals.

I think this definition would withstand the institutionalization of marriage in both traditional and modern cultures, even though I do not think all cultures have institutionalized marriage in ways which are of equal value. For example, the definition does not exclude love from polygamous marriages, though I believe monogamy is a far superior setting for equality and mutual respect. (I would also stress that what I have defined is marital "love," not *marriage* in the legal or institutional senses, which may not require "love" at all.) This commitment is expressed in and intensified by sexual union, but does not consist preeminently in it. Both the sexual union and the intentional commitment can express or even help create the affective, emotional dimension of marital love, but the good faith commitment is more definitive of marital love than the emotional response. I hesitate to say that the desire or attempt to have children is definitive of "marital love," though I am willing to venture that having children expresses the love of spouses more fully and enhances it.

This statement, like others about marriage and sexuality, should be taken at the rather abstract level of an ideal or generalization, not as a specific or inflexible moral norm. In all areas of marital commitment — marital friendship or "intimacy," marital sexuality, and the fulfillment of the social roles of spouses, parents, and family — experiential situations are always diverse, and are often compromises with or adjustments to preexisting factors which are less than ideal. These situations usually manage to challenge our attempts to capture their reality with categories induced from other, albeit similar, experiences. We need not capitulate to the sort of relativism which throws up its hands in the face of complexity and abandons any further search for common ground. After all, a key commitment of the Catholic tradition of theology and ethics has been to seek out objectivity and shared values. However, it is important to insist that in the discussion of marriage, as in other realms of Christian ethics, the critical dialogues must go on, for "objectivity," "values," and "common ground" are disclosed and given substance only in and through the lives of many individuals, relations, and communities.

Jeffrey Skinner

## Prayer to Cottonmouth Blocking the Road to the Pond

You lie like a wet branch fallen in the dust.
No; we pull up short as you spot us

and coil quickly, a stack of trouble. Cool water
seemed a good idea as we sat on the lawn,

heat rising from the grass as if the earth
itself sighed in its hammock, and the clouds

laid fat and drowsy on the horizon. But I've
seen you move across the water's surface,

the sickening ease . . . For you, the old curse
is no impediment; you traded evolution

for a piece of shade, the line of your journey
to the present thin, but clearing a wide

berth. Assassin of the lowlands, slide
your vessel of bad dreams out of our way —

though we have fallen together, your children
are lost in the high grass, thinking it paradise.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*"For crying out loud, Barclay, everybody quibbles now and then!"*

YOU bet they should, Barclay! And even more than quibble, they ought to *converse on* all the items on the table. *Commonweal* has been just the place to do that for generations: excellent service, spirited but civil discussion (it's a tradition), and issues that are as choice as today. Here are some recent examples:

- Arms Control Now: *J. Bryan Hehir*
- Women & Families: *The Editors*
- American Competitiveness: *Lance Compa*
- The Vatican Today: *Hans Küng*
- The Ethics of Dying: *James J. Walter*

What's more, when it comes to involvement, just check *Commonweal*'s correspondence section. You may as well reset the whole table again. We guarantee you'll find satisfaction every time, even with the price. Try the Introductory Offer: Six Months (11 issues) for $9. We're not quibbling!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER . . .

## REFLECTIONS ON INDISSOLUBILITY

BERNARD COOKE

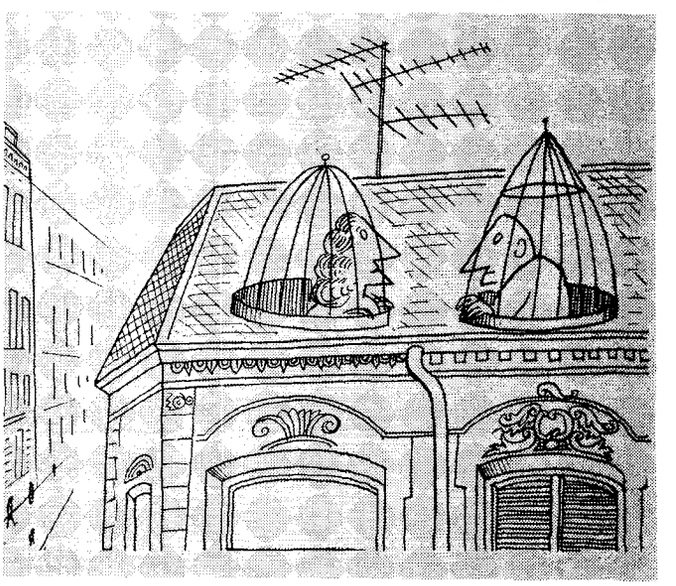
Among the pastoral problems to which Catholic theology should address attention, few have as widespread impact as the question of the indissolubility of Christian marriages. That we are seriously re-examining this element of Catholic teaching reflects pastoral anxiety for the well-being of the millions of women and men in situations that have separated them from their Catholic roots. But it reflects also the broadened context of doing theology today, and it is to this aspect of reflection on indissolubility that I wish to direct my remarks.

Today's developments in theology constitute a multi-faceted phenomenon; within this complex change, it seems to me that three shifts are of special relevance to the topic of our discussion. (1) Today we are using the life experience of believing Christians, as individuals and as communities, as the starting point of our theological reflection. While other sources of insight — Scripture, traditional teaching, liturgy, etc. — enter in as principles of interpretation, it is the providential action of God in people's lives that provides the immediate "word" of revelation with which we must deal as theologians. (2) We are gradually absorbing into our theological process the historical consciousness, the awareness of *process*, and the general acceptance of evolution that are hallmarks of modern Western thought. In doing so, we have rediscovered the eschatological perspective that characterizes biblical thought. (3) We are beginning to theologize ecumenically, realizing that we cannot ignore other Christian traditions — for that matter, religious traditions other than Christian — in our attempts to understand more deeply and accurately the workings of the divine with humans.

Let us, then, draw upon the first of these methodological shifts, namely the use of Christian experience as a basis for reflection. Here we are faced with the concrete and unavoidable reality: according to every ordinary observable measure, large numbers of Catholic marriages do, in fact, dissolve. Can we in the face of this widespread experience justifiably say that these marriages continue to exist?

Any response to that question must distinguish among several meanings of "marriage." For example, at the most elemental biological level, where marriage involves two people mating for the continuation of the race, it is undeniable that in many cases such a strictly biological relationship does not and need not continue beyond a certain point. As a social institution providing stability for the process of begetting and raising children, marriage can take various forms, including, in modern societies, persons being involved in a sequence of marriage-divorce-remarriage. As a distinctive personal relationship involving a unique sexual commitment, marriage does suggest some aspect of indissolubility — at least many people do believe and hope as they marry that this special self-giving is "forever." Nonetheless, the large number of people who have given up this attitude for one of remaining together "as long as things work out" suggests that there is no self-evident and adequate grounding for indissolubility in some promise intrinsic to marital sexual self-giving.

Finally, as a paradigm form of human friendship, marriage at its best should certainly mature into an increasingly indissoluble bond between persons; but human experience teaches us the bitter lesson that friendships, even long-standing and



BERNARD COOKE *chairs the department of religious studies at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts and teaches systematic theology there. His books include* Ministry to Word and Sacrament *and* Sacraments and Sacramentality. The above article is excerpted from Commitment to Partnership: Expolorations of the Theology of Marriage, *edited by William P. Roberts, to be published by Paulist Press in May.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

treasured ones, do not always stand the test of time. While it may always be "eternally true" that two married persons *were* close friends, if the friendship does cease, one simply cannot assert that it continues and constitutes indissolubility.

The reproductive drive of the species, society's concern for successful childbearing, marital sexual intimacy, human friendship — all these dimensions of marriage certainly point to some degree of permanence, but not to sufficient grounds for universally attributing indissolubility to all marriages, including Catholic marriages.

We enter a somewhat different realm, however, when we regard Catholic marriage in the light of the biblical/theological category of covenant. In this context, the contractual aspect of the pledge between woman and man in marriage takes on added dimensions: the couple commit themselves to one another, but they also commit themselves *as a couple* to participate sacramentally and ministerially in the life of the Christian community; they commit themselves to shared discipleship and a life together of working for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Not that all Catholic couples as they begin their married life are conscious of and open to this broader meaning of their marital contract, but this is the intrinsic reality of Christian marriage which we can hope will become understood and appreciated by people.

Certainly, we are closer to a grounding for indissolubility when we regard Catholic marriage as Christian covenant, for the promise involved has a clearly eschatological orientation; it reaches in its significance to the divine. But what are we to say when the contract has been broken by one or both parties? We might in some cases say that there has been infidelity that extends beyond the two persons to the Christian community and to God, that there has been sinful negligence or malice, that some responsibilities may still remain from the earlier covenant commitment. But can we say, for example, that an innocent and betrayed person in a marriage, a person who has clearly been irrevocably deserted, is still involved in a one-sided contract? Can a person remain committed to the Christian community to live out a sacramental relationship that is existentially impossible?

One can, of course, give an essentially legal response to this question: we have a law, a law that gives expression to a view of Catholic marriage which we are not free to abandon. Much as it pains us, the overall common good requires that exceptions not be made, so that the indissoluble character of Christian marriage will be safeguarded. But does the preservation of this ideal demand the absolutely universal implementation of this rule? Perhaps this law itself is meant to be the statement of an ideal toward which Catholics should strive with varying degrees of success or failure. Having raised that question, let us bracket it for the moment and come back to it after we have treated some other elements of sacramental theology.

A final possibility for grounding the indissolubility of Christian marriage lies in the sacramentality of the two Christian persons as they live in relationship to one another. They are the sacrament, not simply because they are recognizable in the community as the two who publicly bound themselves by marital contract, but because and *to the extent* that they can be recognized as translating Christian faith into their married and family life. For Christians the parameters of personal destiny, of personal responsibility and commitment, of personal development and achievement, in brief of human life, are broadened by the revelation contained in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This is true of individual human existence; it is true of the shared existence that is marriage.

When two Christians are married they commit not only their growth as persons to one another, they commit their faith, their relation to God in Christ to one another — obviously, not totally, but to a very considerable degree. The concrete interaction with one another in their daily life will unavoidably serve as "word of God" in the light of which they will develop their self-image, their freedom, their values, their faith and hope and love.

But God's word, no matter what the medium of its transmission, has always been a promise of unconditioned divine fidelity. No characteristic is more emphasized in the biblical literature; Israel's God is a faithful God. When we come to the New Testament, the raising of Jesus from the dead is seen as the culminating fulfillment of God's promises, the supreme proof of divine fidelity. And the question comes then: Can a Christian marriage truly sacramentalize, i.e., both speak of and make present, this divine fidelity unless it itself bears the mark of unfailing, irrevocable endurance? Can a marriage speak experientially about a divine love that never fails, unless it itself is lived as a relationship that is indissoluble? Or — to change the question slightly, but perhaps importantly — if it is not lived this way can one speak of it as sacramental?

In this context, we can return to the questions raised earlier about the commitment implicit in marital intercourse. That there is some special personal commitment signified by this action is hard to deny, but it is also hard to deny that it is signified only to the extent that this act is one of genuine personal love, expressive of each person's selfhood and honest respect of the other's selfhood. The extent to which an actual situation of sexual interchange symbolizes an irrevocable, i.e., indissoluble, commitment of each to the other seems, then, to be commensurate with the attitudes, understandings, etc., of the two people engaged in marital intercourse. Apparently we must ask, in a somewhat more restricted form, the question we just raised about the broader reality of Catholic marriage: When are we justified in applying the term "sacramental"?

Without suggesting any final answer to these questions, it does seem that we can associate the indissolubility of Christian marriage more satisfactorily with the sacramentality of marriage than with any other aspect. Historical studies have pointed out how the meaning of "sacrament" as applied to marriage has shifted from the emphasis on "binding promise" which it had in Augustine's explanation of Christian marriage to greater stress in medieval and subsequent centuries on the meaning of



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Christian symbol." On the other hand, contemporary sacramental theology has increasingly broadened the scope of sacrament beyond simply the liturgical ritual; and it has moved away from the "automatic effect" mentality that characterized so much post-Tridentine explanation of sacraments and has instead re-emphasized the extent to which the sanctifying effectiveness of sacraments depends on the awareness and decisions of the Christian people involved in one or other sacramental context.

Inadequate as our understanding of the sacramentality of Christian marriage is, it does seem to provide some focus for the practical pastoral judgments about indissolubility that we face at this moment in Christian history. Perhaps we can sharpen the focus a bit by raising the question: If indissolubility is in some way and to some degree "intrinsic" to Christian marriage, what is the source of this indissolubility *in a particular case?*

Is God the source — or, to put it more bluntly, is God doing something extra to make a particular Christian marriage indissoluble? Unless I misread present theological developments, it seems that we are presently moving toward a reinterpretation of "providence" in terms of the divine *presence* in the lives of humans. But if this is so, and if we then apply this to marriage, it would accentuate the importance of awareness and free decision in the sacramentality of any given marriage, for God's presence to humans is conditioned by their conscious and free acceptance of the divine saving love.

Is the church the source? Does the Christian community, more specifically do the bearers of authority in the church, have the power to make Catholic marriages dissoluble? And if they do have such power, is their exercise of this power the cause of Catholic marriages being indissoluble? I know of no theological voice that would clearly respond "yes," that would go beyond claiming for the church the power to proclaim and defend and socially implement (within the church's own internal life) an indissolubility that already exists in Christian marriage prior to any church action or regulation.

But has not the official church, at least as far back as Trent, claimed the power to govern the *existence* of Catholic marriages by its legal activity? Despite the most Christian self-giving on the part of two devoted Catholics, the absence of the legally-established form or of proper delegation on the part of the witnessing cleric rendered their marriage invalid.

For example, years ago, when I was studying the canon law of marriage, the teacher highlighted the importance of "proper form" by repeating a canonical "horror story" — whether factual or not, the story quite clearly made its point. According to the account, a socially prominent young couple, wishing to avoid all the fuss of a big public wedding celebration, went for advice to the chancellor of a large U.S. diocese, since he was a close friend of the woman's family. Sympathetic to the young people's desire, he offered to marry them privately in his office; so, he requested his secretary to join them as witness to the marriage, the marriage was performed, and the young couple on their honeymoon informed their respective families of the fait accompli. However, the next day the chancellor — obviously with great embarrassment — realized the lack of due form because there had been only the one witness to the marriage. Clearly, it would have been catastrophic to contact the newly married in the midst of their honeymoon and ask them to return so that they could be married. Legalism was able, however, to triumph: the chancellor obtained a "sanatio in radice" and the young couple never had to know that they began their married life in a state of material sin.

Common sense seems to say that there is something wrong here. Let us suppose that the diocesan chancellor had never realized his error, and that without any legal "sanation" the two people had lived a life together that reflected to their children and to all who knew them the transforming presence of God's love. Could one truly say that there did not exist a deeply sacramental Christian marriage? My purpose in citing this example is not to ridicule canonical arrangements in the church; rather, it is to raise some basic questions about ecclesiastical claims to make things be or not be. More precisely, it is to question ecclesiastical power to condition the indissolubility of marriages.

We seem to be left, then, with no other clear alternative than the one we have already discovered; the source of whatever indissolubility attaches to a particular marriage must be the character of the marriage itself, more specifically its symbolic import as a Christian sacrament.

Up to this point our reflection together could quite justifiably be faulted for the static way in which it has treated marriage, so let us examine the indissolubility of Christian marriage from the perspective of *marriage as process*. Marriages come into existence over a considerable length of time, conditioned by any number of occurrences and experiences and choices, progressing — if they do progress — through stages of change that find their Christian explanation in terms of the mystery of death and resurrection. Men and women are gradually initiated into marriage as a human relationship and a Christian sacrament; the initiation is never completed in this life — no more than is a person's lifelong initiation into Christianity, for becoming married is for most Christians a major element in the broader initiation into Christ.

It would seem, then, that one should not talk about a marriage as being completely or absolutely indissoluble but as becoming increasingly indissoluble as it becomes increasingly Christian; the more profoundly Christian a marriage relationship becomes, the more inseparable are the two persons as loving human beings, and the more does their relationship sacramentalize the absolute indissolubility of the divine-human relationship as it finds expression in the crucified and risen Christ. Exactly how all this will occur in a given instance is as diverse and distinctive as are the people involved and the overall social situation of a given culture or historical period.

To put it in biblical terms, a Christian marriage, like any other created realities, does not exist absolutely; like anything in creation, particularly anything in human history, a marriage exists eschatologically; it is tending toward its fulfillment



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beyond this world. However, the fact that it does not yet have in full fashion the modalities — such as indissolubility — that should characterize it does not mean that it is devoid of them. A Christian marriage is indissoluble, but short of the eschaton it is *incompletely indissoluble*. Perhaps we could profitably borrow a notion from recent New Testament scholarship, namely "realized eschatology." Christian marriage already realizes to some degree the indissolubility which can mirror the divine fidelity to humans, but it cannot yet lay claim to the absoluteness which will come with the fullness of the Kingdom. Similarly, two Christians can be very genuinely and sacramentally married, but they are still being married to one another; their union can become yet richer and stronger.

One wonders if the understanding of Christian marriage has not for centuries suffered the fate of being overly structured and frozen by the use of Greek categories of thought with their presumptions of universality and absoluteness. Since "absolute" is a characteristic reserved to divinity, one cannot strictly speaking apply it to any created reality or to any bit of human knowledge. On the other hand, the view of all creation as eschatological accords with the first of all biblical commands, "I alone am the Lord, your God."

Indissolubility is an aspect of the intrinsic finality of any marriage, more so of a Christian marriage because of its amplified significance. As such, it shares in the responsibility to fulfill that finality which a woman and a man undertake when they enter upon a marriage. Indissolubility is something they should strive to intensify in their shared life. But that does not say that it is impossible for them to fail at this task, impossible for the actual indissolubility of a marriage to gradually weaken and ultimately disappear.

Perhaps we can and must say that the *promise* not to engage in marital intimacy with any other person, the promise that each party made at the time of beginning their marriage, remains in force no matter what happens. Perhaps we can and must say the *responsibility* for the other rests permanently on each of them. But how can we say that a relationship that in its human and existential aspects, and therefore in its sacramentality, has dissolved is indissoluble?

The contemporary church is rapidly regaining its sense of Christian existence as a process, a lifelong initiation into relationship with the Christian community and with the risen Lord. This is the clear import of the post-Vatican II revision of the rite for the initiation of adults. As in the past, liturgical action points the way for our theological reflection and our doctrinal clarification: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. "Being Christian" is something a person only gradually and incompletely achieves.

For Christians, married life is meant to share in this initiation into Christ. The clear conclusion is that an individual Christian marriage does not from its first moments completely reflect the Christ-mystery, completely reflect the indissoluble bond of saving love that links Christ with his spouse, the church, any more than a person is completely Christian with baptism. One *becomes* Christian; one *becomes* married.

By way of corollary, it might be well to extend these remarks to the notion of marital consummation. There is a long history of the role of first sexual intercourse between a couple as establishing a societal bond, and along with this a long history of Christianity considering first marital intercourse as somehow intrinsic to the marriage contract and therefore to the very existence of the marriage. I have no intention of summarizing, even briefly, that history. Suffice it to recall the operative church law that regards a marriage soluble if it is only *ratum* and not *consummatum*.

What I do wish to do is suggest the impropriety of such an abstract understanding of sexual intercourse, especially of marital intercourse. It is true that for two people deeply in love, there is often profound meaning in their first full sexual intimacy, but theirs will be a sad married life if they do not progress in their self-giving far beyond this first experience. Too much of the discussion of sexual intercourse among moral theologians and canonists has forgotten that it is a *human* activity, even though they have verbally nodded in that direction. Precisely because it is so human — distinctive with each couple, fragilely linked with all the other elements of a couple's relationship to one another, symbolically expressive of so much that cannot find explicit verbalization yet is itself in need of communication between persons to make its meaning clear — truly human sexual intercourse needs to be learned over a long period of time. And when one introduces Christian significance into this action so that it can become the heart of the marriage's sacramentality, the need for lifelong learning becomes only too apparent. Sexual intercourse does consummate Christian marriage, but only in this context of ongoing personal intimacy, for it can only authentically say what the two Christians honestly are for one another.

Tragically, very many marriages are scarcely consummated as personal relationships; they do not grow. Among these are many that begin in a Catholic wedding ceremony. If consum-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mation is intrinsic to the establishment of a Christian marriage, one can only wonder how many marriages qualify as "Christian," and therefore how much claim they can lay to indissolubility.

What can one say by way of conclusion? A list of questions:

- To what extent does modern process view of reality affect the way in which we consider a particular Christian marriage as indissoluble?
- If Christian couples themselves are the sacrament of Christian marriage, and couples obviously differ greatly in the extent to which they are genuinely Christian, to what extent is a particular marriage truly sacramental, to what extent does it actually symbolize the love between Christ and the church?
- And if the special indissolubility of *Christian* marriage is tied to sacramentality, in what way does indissolubility pertain to marriages that seem to have lost all operative sacramentality?
- Or are we to say that the covenant pledge, with one's partner and with the Christian community, which one took at the wedding ceremony remains a promise to the community even if the actual human marriage relationship dissolves? In this case the indissolubility attaches to the overall ecclesial sacramentality of the institution of Christian marriage rather than to the sacramentality of this or that particular marriage union.
- But, to return to our emphasis on doing theology out of experience, is not the experience of "getting married" and the significance (sacramentality) attached to it one of promise to the other person rather than to the community?
- Finally, it seems that we need a somewhat new though tradition-respecting look at indissolubility to discover whether we are justified in applying it as absolutely as we Catholics have done in more recent centuries. It strikes me that a more flexible and individualized approach will still continue to honor the teaching that Christian marriage is of its nature indissoluble.

## SCREEN

# LAUGHS & DISAPPOINTMENT

'FORTUNE,' 'KANGAROO,' 'THERAPY'

*Outrageous Fortune* is female slapstick enlivened by sharp writing and fine acting. The writing is by newcomer Leslie Dixon, who seems to have memorized all the tricks of comedy thrillers and "buddy" films, and then innovatively applied them to an odd couple of women. The acting is by Shelley Long and Bette Midler, whose contrasting characters and comic timing are so strong that they cover over the few lame parts of Dixon's screenplay.

Long and Midler play two actresses—Midler a vulgarian and sometime porn star, Long (blonde, WASP, and willowy) a Yalie taking extensive postgraduate years of ballet, fencing, and elocution lessons in New York. The two wind up in the same acting class and instantly despise each other. Farce begins when fake teacher and actual spy Peter Coyote secretly seduces both.

Daring economy makes *Outrageous Fortune* work as excellent light entertainment. Watch how quickly, for example, Dixon gets her girls to New Mexico, where they try to track Coyote down. No detail is wasted, as Dixon matter-of-factly employs material at the beginning of the film that comes back perfectly at the end, providing the comic exhilaration of apt method inside zany madness.

Often there is too much broad humor, especially from Midler, and one scene too many depicting feminine foibles. But some scenes are among the best humor on screen since *Tootsie*: Long's reaction when she first sees Midler's apartment, her outrage that Midler should use acting talent to lie to get information, her utterly hypocritical use of the same technique at an airline counter, and a *Cagney and Lacey* imitation when, as such films often require, the naifs (here girls) finally get to handle guns.

A small note: I missed the advanced screenings of this film—in a private studio with plush seats, no waiting, and other critics. I saw it on a Saturday night after standing on line in the cold. I honestly wonder if the conditions of criticism don't affect judgment; like other ordinary filmgoers, I might have appreciated this film more only because I was grateful to get in.

Another small note: the film is by Disney Studios, which signed Midler to a three-film contract for "older audiences." A Disney spokesman says this means "anyone over twenty-five." That Saturday night, he was right: the crowd was positively ancient, with few moviegoers under twenty. There's a delicious irony here: just as everyone in Hollywood is courting youth, Disney has completely reversed itself. I wish them luck.

*Kangaroo*, based on a story by D. H. Lawrence, disappoints in a peculiarly literary, uncinematic way. This Australian movie, directed by Tim Burstall, stars Colin Friels as the Lawrence stand-in, a writer named Somers, who takes to that island continent after World War One. Friels's real wife, the fine actress Judy Davis (*My Brilliant Career* and *A Passage to India*), plays Lawrence's wife, Frieda, and provides the film's only pleasures.

*Kangaroo* is marred by the weak acting of Friels and of Hugh Keyes-Byrne as the title character—"Kangaroo" is a code name for a general who, in the aftermath of the war, feels that Australia needs a dose of paternalism and military vigor to cure society of the weaknesses of democracy. Burstall has also provided *Kangaroo* with a weak screenplay, following Lawrence too closely and failing to translate his periodically insufferable bombast into credible and compelling terms. The rhetoric of the General, his desire to have a Poet on the side of



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his Movement, and the Poet's affection for the General ring false throughout. Burstall fails to do enough to save us from Lawrence's world of capital letters and characters who are made to carry more symbolic weight than they can sustain. Dying, the General asks (for the umpteenth time) if the Poet loves him, but we wonder how the latter could ever have considered it. Only a next-door neighbor, superbly played by John Walton, makes the temptation of fascism understandable.

It all might have worked. Judy Davis has some strong moments as an ironic observer of her husband's search for what she calls "David and Jonathan" relationships. But Burstall allows her to play no vital role in the ultimate resolution of his flirtation with his demi-führer. At times the film edges towards a genuine psychomachia—a battle for the poet's soul between the wife and the general—but Burstall never lets Davis get far enough into the story. In her best scene, she fires away at her husband's little boy machismo, to which Friels responds that he "should be lord and master" in their relationship. Then, without resolving the issue, Friels simply walks away from her. À la Lawrence, a woman's voice cannot be allowed to affect the action.

Down-under male chauvinism can be hilarious—for example, the camp star of *Crocodile Dundee*, Paul Hogan. But *Kangaroo* makes the mistake of never establishing a coherent attitude toward its subject. On the one hand, it takes chauvinism, both male and national, too seriously; on the other, it creates a strong critical voice, then exiles her. Lawrence raises complex issues, but sixty years should have led to greater clarity about them. Lawrence needed an editor; Burstall censors the best one.

*Beyond Therapy* is far enough beyond bad as to be beyond comment—if it were not for its waste of real talent. Julie Hagerty (the tall, sweet nutcake from *Airplane* and *Lost in America*) plays a winsome young woman searching the Personal ads. She finds Jeff Goldblum (*The Big Chill*), who quickly offends her at a restaurant rendezvous with some brazen sexual suggestions. She leaves, but their paths keep crossing, especially at the adjacent offices of their oddball therapists (Tom Conti and Glenda Jackson). The farcical script comes from Christopher Durang's successful off-Broadway play, and is directed by Robert Altman. There, sadly, is the rub.

Altman was once one of our finest directors—the iconoclastic maker of *M.A.S.H.*, of the masterpiece *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, and of *Nashville*. But he has never come up from radicalism, instead fixating on now tiresome gestures of adolescent artsiness that were fresh, if ever, in the late 1960s. In his new film, Altman employs his characteristic overlapping dialogue, blunting much of Durang's wit. Tossing in "prop" characters, whose function seems only to sit or run about throwing either sexual hints or tantrums, Altman seems bent on proving the tedium of incoherence as an art form.

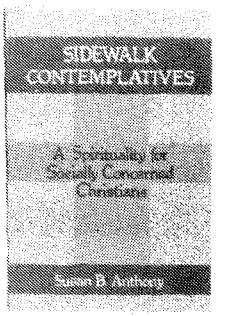
Worse, he seems hardly conscious that stage-based farce is only credible because of the power of fine acting to force a willing suspension of disbelief. He never allows Hagerty and Goldblum to carry *Beyond Therapy*; hyperactive camerawork continually blurs the focus on character. The final pan away from Goldblum, for example, includes too much of the real world to let us enter fully into the character's concluding and summarizing soliloquy. Durang may be to blame as well, but, as director, Altman has the primary responsibility to make the adaptation work.

The play itself is flawed by its ease with sexual promiscuity; the film's press notes describing Hagerty's character as "fairly conservative" reveal the bias. It is not "conservative" to resist a stranger's rude stab at seduction; it is hardly "conservative" to answer a Personal ad at all. To their credit, Hagerty and Goldblum humanize the sordid tale and even make their search for sexual love sympathetic. Of course, if Altman's head was on, he might have noticed enough about changing times to have included some reference to the fear of AIDS, especially since Goldblum plays a bisexual leaving his lover (Christopher Guest). But maybe this would have been "conservative."

The bisexual theme allows Altman to throw in references to 1971's *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* and the role played there by Glenda Jackson—as if there were some automatic merit to art sophomorically cross-referencing with art. Such notions of self-referentiality are *de rigueur* in two places: film schools and France, revered as sacred *"inter textualité"* by those who would have no other gods before them. Some reviewers have


"A Spiritual Classic For Our Day . . ."*

"*Sidewalk Contemplatives* offers us the strong medicine of contemplative action to heal the wounds of our world."
—Sister Maria Riley, O.P., Center of Concern




"The 20th century Susan B. Anthony unites her goal of radical spiritual change with the inherited Anthony zeal for radical social change."
—Rev. William B. Perkins, S.J.

"*Sidewalk Contemplatives* brings the Gospel closer to today's societal ills."—Rev. Louis J. Putz, C.S.C.*

Susan B. Anthony offers ". . . to a world crying out for justice. . . hope and social action—both informed by a solid prayer life."—Sister Carol Coston, O.P., NETWORK

*A Crossroad Book* $8.95

At your bookstore, or call 1-800-638-3030

The Crossroad Publishing Company
370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

noted how *Beyond Therapy* switches wildly—with no doubt some stab at deep meaning—between New York and Parisian locales. Maybe Altman's heart belongs in Paris, away from us philistines. The worn ways of *Epater le Bourgeois (Part ?)* fit him like a glove. TOM O'BRIEN

## STAGE

# A PAIR OF SURVIVORS

## MILLER'S 'DANGER: MEMORY!'

The return of Arthur Miller has been much heralded in the press—see, for instance, Mel Gussow's piece in the *New York Times* (February1)—but he has not really been far away. It is true that he has not had a successful new play on Broadway since *The Price* (1968), and that he has published a great deal of non-dramatic work in the last twenty years, but the new plays have kept coming—full length, one-act, television—and his earlier plays have been regularly revived by professional and amateur companies all across the country—even before the Dustin Hoffman *Death of a Salesman* offered its imprimatur. Two major productions of *All My Sons* within a few months—at the Long Wharf in New Haven and on PBS—may be unusual but hardly ground-breaking. Even so, I was surprised when I went to London at the end of last year and found Miller represented at both the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), and by plays—*The American Clock, The Archbishop's Ceiling*—whose American reception had been disastrous. Both plays differ from the versions performed at home. Miller told me in a letter that these are the original scripts, restored to erase the production changes made when they first appeared, but then, he also said that he gave the originals to Methuen for publication and the National version of *The American Clock* has scenes and characters not in the Methuen play.

Whatever the provenance of the script, *The American Clock*, in Peter Wood's vigorous production, is the more successful of the two. A "mosaic," as Miller called it in a note to Wood, it is a group portrait of the Depression inspired by Studs Terkel's *Hard Times*; in fact, some of the characters, like Arthur Robertson, the financier whom Miller uses as narrator, come directly from Terkel. Short scenes concentrate on reactions to the crash, a farm foreclosure, a relief office. But the unifying plot that snakes through the fragments has to do with the Baums, a well-heeled Jewish family made suddenly poor. There are no revelations in what is, after all, a familiar Miller story (it hovers over *After the Fall* and *The Price*), but it gains by being put into a larger context. It is that context which works best in the production, the piece as a whole being much stronger than any of the individual scenes. Wood keeps the stage in constant motion, one scene fading quickly into another, the specific dissolving into the general, and all accompanied by period music. The theatricality of so mobile a mosaic is as much Wood as Miller, but the thematic close, in which the painful decade is celebrated for the vitality of the American people, belongs to the playwright. The director can only serve him here, and Wood does so splendidly.

When *The Archbishop's Ceiling* was first done at the Kennedy Center, the characters were little more than representative figures in a play of ideas (see *Commonweal*, July 8, 1977). At the RSC, they seem much more human, partly because they now inhabit The Pit, where they once rattled around the immense Kennedy stage. The small theater is also an appropriate enclosure thematically, reflecting the Eastern European Country which is both home and trap for the characters. Once again, the action centers on Sigmund, the writer who must choose between the risk of prison and the exile that will cut him off from his cultural roots. The cross currents of political and personal motivations, once little more than stalking horses for abstract ideas, now really belong to the characters, giving the play greater richness, although Maya's decline from symbol to drunk is not completely rewarding. The play ends now not with the romantic affirmation of the smuggled manuscript, but with the quieter recognition that Sigmund's staying has much more than personal meaning, and with his desire that his American friend take out of the country the letters he has received from literary figures all over the world. The community of writers transcends any one nation, the play suggests, but the individual's place in the larger community rests in part on his struggle within his own country.

Here at home, Miller is working on a much smaller scale in the two one-acters that make up *Danger: Memory!* at the Lincoln Center. *I Can't Remember Anything* is a two-character play in which Lee and Leonora, two old friends, meet—as they presumably always do—for dinner in his kitchen and carry on a cross-purpose conversation crippled by her refusal to remember the past and his constant evocation of a roseate view of the years in which her husband, his partner, was the center of their existence. Although her conviction that their lives have meant nothing and that the world is "continually getting worse" fits badly with what she calls his "goddamned hopefulness," they are a pair of survivors who depend on one another for whatever human connection they have. As Mason Adams and Geraldine Fitzgerald play the parts, their prickliness becomes a function of their closeness, and memory seems less dangerous than the general title suggests.

*Clara* is a more difficult play to reduce to a few sentences; in fact, a more difficult play to accept. In it, a young woman has just been murdered. Clara was a psychologist whose patients were prisoners and ex-prisoners, one of whom was her lover. Although the man, a Puerto Rican who had killed an earlier girlfriend, is the prime suspect, Clara's father cannot remember his name until he has made a convoluted trip into his own past, dredging up his own ability to kill (during World War II) and his saving his black troops from a Southern lynch mob, an action which seems to have given Clara her fearlessness and her dedication. The process tags him as an ac-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

complice in his daughter's murder, having infected her with dangerous if admirable liberal sentiments, and his recognition of his complicity frees him to finger the man. The implications of the piece escape me if it is to be taken as something more general than one man's complex struggle with his own best instincts. The play is further troublesome in that it is presented as a police investigation, an aggressive homicide detective's picking constantly at the befuddled father, nastily so as James Tolkan plays him. Unless the lieutenant is taken simply as a device like the dead Clara, who makes an appearance as a child, the play becomes both arbitrary and preposterous. Perhaps he is there as the father's accusatory other self, a mechanism to keep the self-analysis from becoming a monologue.

Despite my doubts about *Clara, Danger: Memory!* is well worth a trip to Lincoln Center, even though new birth at home is not quiet as exciting as resurrection abroad.

GERALD WEALES

# BOOKS

# Epistle from a democratic capitalist

**WILL IT LIBERATE?**
QUESTIONS ABOUT LIBERATION THEOLOGY

**Michael Novak**
**Paulist, $14.95, 311 pp.**

**Paul E. Sigmund**

This is an important but flawed book. It is important because it is a conscious attempt to carry out a dialogue with the liberation theologians concerning their economic and political vision of the good society. It argues (1) that their use of Marxist categories and their penchant for socialism leads them to embrace a statist economic system that will be counterproductive in its effort to aid the poor, and (2) that liberation theology is so vague about its political institutions that it can lead its adherents to support societies such as Nicaragua and Cuba that ignore the rule of law, violate human rights, and suppress democracy.

The book is flawed because it makes the liberation theologians more Marxist than they are. The dust jacket refers to "churchmen who claim to be both Marxist and Christian" and it completely ignores the central position of the grassroots Basic Ecclesial Communities in the thinking and the practice ("praxis") of the liberationists.

This is not Michael Novak's first encounter with liberation theology. In the June 1979 issue of *Commentary* he published "Liberation Theology and the Pope" which praised Pope John Paul II for attacking "the unthinking fantasies of theologians bent on the creation of totalitarian processes whose consequences they do not allow themselves to foresee and whose dynamics they can not control." In March 1982, he published "Why Latin America is Poor" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, arguing that the liberation theologians were wrong in attributing Latin American underdevelopment to dependency on the U.S., since the problem was Latin America's Hispanic value-system that did not value entrepreneurial skills. A similar argument appeared in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, published in the same year (Simon & Schuster). In *Freedom with Justice: Catholic Social Thought and Liberal Institutions* (Harper & Row, 1984) he attacked the liberation theologians' claim to be speaking for the poor, and in the *New York Times Magazine* for October 21, 1984 he argued "The Case against Liberation Theology," criticizing the liberation theologians for their "naive utopianism about human nature and their ignorance of the importance of wealth creation." Suggesting that "the liberation theologians' thought promised a mirror image of Latin American authoritarian societies of the past, but this time of the left rather than the right," he proposed that they look to the "pluralistic, communitarian, public-spirited, dynamic and inventive" liberal society for a model of genuine liberation.

*Will It Liberate?* is an attempt to carry this project further by focusing upon the liberation theologians' economics and politics. This means first an attack on their use of Marxist categories, specifically the class struggle, and the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and the establishment of a socialist system as the solution to the problem of poverty and oppression. Now it is true that the early writings of the best-known liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, did describe the class struggle as a fact, and identified the poor in Latin America with the proletariat, but he has since moved away from — without ever specifically disavowing — his early writings. Gutierrez's 1986 book, *La Verdad los Hara Libres (The Truth Shall Make You Free)*, as well as his response to Vatican criticisms of his writings, argue that liberation theology must continue to make use of social science (not just Marxism) in its analysis of poverty, but do so in a critical way that subjects it to continual evaluation and revision. In doing so, he says, actual historical experience including that of "historical socialism" must be taken into account in one's evaluation of the possibilities of liberation under different systems. Gutierrez agrees that liberation is both social and individual in character and quotes with approval the 1986 Vatican Instruction on *Christian Freedom*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*and Liberation,* "A liberation that does not take into account the personal liberty of those who fight for it is already condemned to failure."

A similar appreciation of the central importance of democracy to liberation appears in a paper by the liberation theologian, Hugo Assmann, delivered at a conference on "Liberation Theology and Liberalism," organized by Novak and published last year in his journal, *This World,* which argues that "democratic values are revolutionary values" and that the left must "now reestablish their organic relation to the popular majorities which have never understood their abstract revolutionism."

There is nothing of this in Novak's book, although it was written after extended discussions with Assmann. Nor is there the slightest reference to the Basic Ecclesial Communities that have been central to liberation theologians' thinking from the beginning. It is there that Gutierrez's "critical reflection on praxis in the light of the Word" is supposed to take place and not in some theological Politburo. And it is there that the dynamism of the new movement has been so clear and attractive that it has led the Brazilian bishops to a vigorous defense of liberation theology at the Extraordinary Vatican Synod of Bishops in December 1985 and in a three-day discussion with the pope in March 1986. The latter discussion led John Paul II to write the Brazilian bishops an eleven-page letter in April 1986 which endorsed liberation theology as "not only timely, but useful and necessary. It should constitute a new stage — in close connection with the former ones — of theological reflection."

The crucial question is the one that the newly-elected pope raised with a *New York Times* reporter on the plane to the 1979 Puebla Conference of Latin American bishops. "Ah yes, liberation theology, but *which* liberation theology?" Because there really are two — an anti-capitalist structuralism that has used Marxism as one of the ways to identify the causes of oppression, and a grass-roots populism that wishes to relate the Scripture and the teachings of the church to the lived experience of the poor. Michael Novak has written about the first — and has been appropriately critical of its indifference to the creation of wealth, and its lack of awareness of the need for constitutional and socio-economic restraints on political power.

In *Will It Liberate?* he goes farther and launches a wholesale critique of various forms of socialism and their claim to liberate the poor — although this is only done after he has redefined Western European social democracy (because it accepts a market economy) as a form of democratic capitalism. However, his book ignores the second and more influential aspect of liberation theology, its focus on the grass-roots participation and religious experience of the poor. This has now been endorsed both by the pope and by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1986 *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation.* (See especially paragraphs 68-70 on preferential love for the poor, the basic communities, and "theological reflection developed from experience.")

Novak's attack on the Marxist elements in liberation theology comes too late. In response to the criticisms of other Latin American theologians and of the Vatican, the liberation theologians have largely abandoned the crude Marxist rhetoric of the early 1970s. They have not abandoned, however, their readiness to blame "sinful structures," i.e., capitalism and multinational corporations, for the poverty and oppression in Latin America. Michael Novak challenges them on this point, and one hopes that this book may mark the beginning of a fruitful dialogue between liberals and liberationists on the subject of capitalism, socialism, democracy, and the causes and cure of poverty.

## CAUGHT UP IN SENTENCE-MAKING

**THE COMPLETE PROSE OF MARIANNE MOORE**

**Edited by Patricia C. Willis**

**Viking, $24.95, 723 pp.**

**Wayne Koestenbaum**

Marianne Moore's *Complete Prose* is more than the complement to her poetry; she toiled at prose sentences with a visionary mania that exceeds the poet's. The woman who confessed to "a mania for straight writing" wrote sinuously; her diction is so archly precise one almost hears the whirr of the word as it slides into place — the cog of the word's sense meshing with its cog of sound. Sentences as fanatically wrought as hers deserve the name of poetry even if they posed as journalism.

Marianne Moore depended upon quotation in her reviews, asking repeatedly, "why paraphrase what for maximum impact should be quoted verbatim?" She read with ornithological curiosity and raptness — awake to each felicity a writer offered her, as if each *mot juste* were a fresh species. A book, to her, was a collection of remarkable sentences — moments of fidelity, of "verisimilitude" — specimens she then exhibited in her own reviews. She valued the writer who could bring "actuality" onto the page; she considered her work "if not a cabinet of fossils, a kind of collection of files in amber." In her criticism, she quoted rather than paraphrased, to arrest the writer's live world. But she did not efface herself; quotation armored her with an anonymity that "seems like a signature." Quotation, for Moore, was a form of genteel plunder.

Her eccentric art branded as hers anything she touched. For example,

> In 1934, [Wallace Stevens] . . . became Vice President of the Accident and Indemnity Company of Hartford . . . He died August 2, 1955. He was in magnificent contrast with the two Dromios in *The*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Comedy of Errors* — "They must be bound and laid in some dark room."

What have the two Dromios to do with Wallace Stevens's death? She valued the unsaid, the "lion's leap": "expanded explanation tends to spoil the lion's leap." Gaps in sense were Pound's device, and she revered Pound as master. His imagistic "direct presentation" was Moore's rule of thumb, but an instinct for perverse wording countered her admiration for "straight writing." She believed that "we must be clear as our natural reticence allows us to be": in the grip of "an unbearable accuracy," Moore, like Pound, discovered that verisimilitude in words depends on miscellany, that a "burning desire to be explicit" dooms one to the roundabout. Explicitness, for Moore, remained a chimera, impossible to seize. Pound's ideogrammatic method in the *Cantos* has its counterpart in Moore's prose, her sentences exhibiting so much toil that toil begins to seem her subject.

Moore sought and found salvation in the writer's work. Humility, modesty patience — if she believed these to be the writer's virtues, then her straining sentences are evidence of virtue. One reads Marianne Moore's prose to savor the labor that has been spent, to learn that craft is dignity and that good writing's "rapt, undeprecatory love for the subject" is a splendor of spirit as well as of craft.

Moore valued "gusto": there is gusto in her description of "a bronze-breasted, steel-gauntleted voluptuousness which is not always alluring," and in her praise of another writer's "not to be improved upon bits of actuality, and a graceful, seven-zephyred, corybantic suavity of interpretation." Perhaps Moore's most imposing chain of adjectives is a "spry-slow suave quaintly-toddling selfsufficient imperviousness to weather." Moore's omission of commas between adjectives, here, is not neglect: she believed good writing to be, in part, the science of rendering pauses without notating them through excessive punctuation. She relished the inevitable emphasis — the pause that exactly-calibrated prose cadence, without the surgery of commas, obliges a reader to make. She loved, too, the multisyllabic word, not for its arrogance, but for its tactility, its insistence as word. A word as clumsy as "verisimilitude" — a favorite of hers — has full-blooded presence and cantankerousness. She was fond, too, of "verity" and "veraciousness," of any word that had its root in truth.

Other words Moore favored in her reviews were "arrest" and "detain": good writing arrested, detained, and sometimes even "smote" the reader. One is smitten by her description of Wallace Stevens's poetry: "Upon the general marine volume of statement is set a parachute-spinnaker of verbiage which looms out like half a cantaloupe and gives the body of the theme the air of a fabled argosy advancing." Comparing books not to other books but to nautical things, she finds in Pound's rhythm "a firm piloting of rebellious fluency," a "quality of sustained emphasis, as of a cargo being shrewdly steered to the edge of the quai." In her brief allusion to a forgotten poet, Lady Margaret Sackville West, Marianne Moore is so visibly caught up in sentence-making that she moves past mannerism into a sublime terseness:

> With the distinctness of the spinet and the rigor of the sermon, restrained without constraint, preserved when they tremble upon the brink of a banality by that sensibility which recoils from malapert insistence, these erect poems are consistently alluring in their respect for a freedom that must be permitted in the same measure in which it is enjoyed; as in their predilection for romance — for flagged paths and mignonette, for roses by the latticed window, for polished floors and peacocks of clipped yew.

Moore's one-sentence review tell us little about Lady Margaret Sackville West, but much about the art of the sentence.

One notices Moore's fondness for negatives — for words beginning with the prefix *un:* "unselfprotectively," "uncompactly," "uncontrol," "unpity," "unpanoplied," "unceremony," "unassumptive," "unhoodwinked," "undozing." This predilection permits her to contest subtly, to rebel decorously. Moore writes that "we find, intensive, unmixed, and unimpeded, the white fire of the poet — of one who, repudiating miscellany, is immemorially garlanded." Moore did not repudiate miscellany: she embraced it. But where, in her eccentricity, is the white fire? One admires, even reveres, the "hydra-headed, ostrich-natured prose, at the same time wondering why an artist who strove for "straight writing" wrote so crookedly. She claimed that "women are not noted for terseness." Would Marianne Moore, then, have considered her own terse style unwomanly? Moore's *Complete Prose* — so jeweled and consummate that one turns to it for instruction in the art of writing — strangely erases the woman whose signature is clear in each missing comma, each "aesthetically intent, precipitate, by no means 'easy' " clause.

# VOICES FROM THE TUNNEL

**DEAR AMERICA**
LETTERS HOME FROM VIETNAM
**Edited by Bernard Edelman**
**Norton, $13.95, Washington Square, $7.95 paper, 276 pp.**

**C. Peter Ripley**

After years of ignoring their longest and costliest conflict, Americans are reexamining the Vietnam War. The process began with the memorial in Washington, D.C. That full expanse of black marble with its finely chiseled names of the war dead has become the most visited of our national monuments. It is not a gathering place for festive tourists. The crowds are quiet except for those who weep and those who give comfort. The rediscovery process, like the memorial itself, is an attempt to



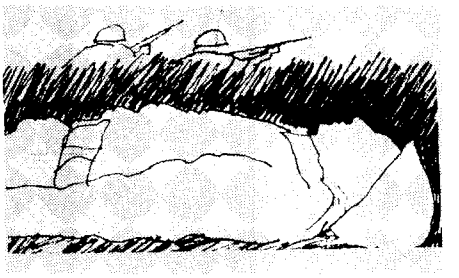
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come to terms with the young men and women who served in Vietnam, not with the politicians who sent them there. Policy, strategy, tactics, and ideology do not yet interest the nation. Soldiers do.

The best of what we read, see, and hear about Vietnam examines the soldiers' experiences, and much of that is personal, private, and often mournful. Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." is an anthem to the Vietnam vet whose patriotism is abused, whose sacrifice is forgotten, and whose problems are ignored by an indifferent government. The early movies, the good ones—*Coming Home* and *Deerhunter*—tell stories about the personal side of that war, about the pain, suffering, and death of people we come to care about. No Rambos there. Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (Avon, $3.95, 288 pp.) is one of the finest books ever on men at war ("I think Vietnam is what we had instead of happy childhoods"), and it is arguably the best of the new journalism ("I went to cover the war and the war covered me," wrote reporter Herr). Wheelchair-bound Ron Kovic's memoir, *Born on the Fourth of July* (McGraw Hill, $7.95, 204 pp.), and Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (Ballantine, $2.50, 328 pp.) which have been out for several years, are being reread.

Two recent books of documents personalize the war with revealing snippets and fragmentary bits of information and emotion in ways that no other kind of literature can. Mark Baker's *Nam* (Morrow, $12.95, 324 pp.) is a collection of interviews with Vietnam vets. Straightforward, stark, revealing, and even shocking at times, these interviews help define the Vietnam experience and give expression to the emotional and physical baggage that came home with the soldiers. *Dear America* is a collection of soldiers' letters published by the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission.

For those familiar with the era, the vocabulary in *Dear America* alone will stir memories and emotions of another time, certainly another place: friendlies, fragging, lurps, claymores, Hueys, hoochies, Charlie, humping the boonies, short-times, body bag, body count,



medevac, gook, dink, hot zone, and much more. Mainstream American language proved inadequate to describe life in Vietnam, and that, too, helps define the experience.

Yet the citizen-soldiers, most of whom were college age, used simple language when writing about their passions and emotions — of dead friends, of relentless exhaustion, of painful loneliness, of exhilaration when killing (and sometimes the shame that followed). Their stories, plainly told to friends and loved ones in private messages, are dramatically understated as individual letters and enormously revealing as a collection.

*Dear America* is organized in thematic chapters that reflect the experiences and attitudes shared by those who spent their 365 days in-country — thirty more if you were a Marine. The "Cherries" tell of their arrival as they awaited their first combat with a mix of apprehension, eagerness to serve, and fear of failure to measure up. Fear of death and dying came later.

"Grunts" write about "Humping the Boonies," slogging through the canopied jungle, struggling over mountains, and wading in leech-filled water on search-and-destroy missions; their objective was to make contact with the enemy, who was seldom seen but was somehow always close enough to make contact on his own terms. Life in the boonies, reported one vet, consisted of long periods of fatigue and boredom broken by periods of utter mayhem.

A body count was the official measure of military success. "Beyond the Body Count" describes the myriad ways combat tormented the soldiers. They reflected on war, on the fear of being wounded, on the friendlies, on their begrudging respect for the North Vietnamese soldiers, and on the carnage they brought to Vietnam and to themselves in the process.

"A World of Hurt" contemplates every imaginable source of human pain and suffering. Being wounded was only the most obvious — "They pulled a few stitches out . . . so I only have about a thousand to go." The endless fatigue — " . . . I don't know where to start except to say I'm tired. It seems that's all I ever say any more." The death of a friend — "No other KIA of WIA hit me like that. I sat down and cried. I couldn't stop. I can still see his face now. I will never forget it." And there was the blunt fatalism that set in after too many friends were killed or wounded — "It's happened before, happened then, and it will happen again." A world of hurt could be brought on by any number of emotional and physical experiences — bad news from home, no news from home, a refused R & R, too long in the bush, and on and on.

"What Am I Doing Here" unfolds the slowly souring attitudes toward the war held by the men who fought it. Early on, through the mid-sixties, they wrote about serving their country, about stopping Communism, and about being young men at war, as if they had listened too long to John F. Kennedy. But like the military phases of the war and the sentiment at home, the soldiers changed later in the decade. With no clear end in sight and their mission growing steadily more ambiguous, some troops began doubting the value of the sacrifices they and their friends were making. Frustration and bit-

## REVIEWERS

PAUL E. SIGMUND *is a professor of politics and director of the Latin American Studies at Princeton. His books include* Natural Law in Political Thought, The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile *and* St. Thomas Aquinas on Ethics and Politics.

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM*'s poems will be appearing in upcoming issues of* Epoch, The Agni Review, *and* Shenandoah.

C. PETER RIPLEY *teaches history at The Florida State University, including a course on America in the 1960's. He is also editor of the* Black Abolitionist Papers, *a five-volume documentary history of black involvement in the anti-slavery movement.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terness creeps into their letters as it did their lives.

"We Gotta Get Out of This Place" is at once the title of a sixties' rock song and the soldiers' plea for getting out of Vietnam and back to "the world," alive. Even when they were on their way home, their joy at leaving Vietnam did not match their dread of being there. Some, like Peter Roepcke, seemed to understand that getting out of Vietnam did not mean Vietnam was finished with them. "Well, it is all over now. Now it's time to forget these things. I close my eyes and try to sleep, but all I can see is Jenkins lying there with his brains hanging out or Lefty with his eyes shot out. Hell, I don't know why I am writing all this."

For all its richness in human emotion, there is something missing in *Dear America*. These authentic voices from Vietnam are mostly silent about the mean side of America's presence in that foreign land. No mention of necklaces of human ears, no jokes about building a Viet Cong from pieces, no Zippo democracy (burning villages), and no rapes, murders, and random abuse of civilians — that dark corner of the war does not exist in *Dear America*. Read *Dear America*, but read *Nam*, too; if the one moves you, the other will shock you.

*Dear America* — like the music, films, and other books mentioned earlier — touches on the warrior, not the war, and that is just as well, because the two must be separated before the nation can come to terms with either. We are acknowledging that there were no winners in Vietnam, only survivors and losers. Countless combat soldiers who returned alive and unhurt are among the victims; many were pulled into an unwanted war, inadequately trained for fighting a guerrilla war, and then greeted with indifference and hostility on their return home. Setting that straight is a worthwhile national purpose.

But any goodwill that comes from such a reconciliation should be kept separate from our assessment of America's involvement in Vietnam. Whatever peace the nation makes with the Vietnam vets must not be extended to our Vietnam policy or the politicians and generals who crafted the policy and then continued it long after it served no purpose other than to preserve national pride and vanity. That demands a separate accounting.

## CORRESPONDENCE

*(Continued from page 162)*

other; the bodies of a man and a woman seem designed for union with one another.

Clearly, it would be a mistake to argue from biological fact to "what ought to be," that is, from "is" to "ought"; but certainly, the facts of biology do lend much credence to the view that heterosexuality — and not homosexuality — is natural, normal, and the morally acceptable lifestyle.

According to C.W. Socarides, a professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, "Homosexuality, the choice of a partner of the same sex for orgiastic satisfaction, is not innate. There is no connection between sexual instinct and the choice of sexual object. Such an object choice is learned, acquired behavior: there is no inevitable genetically inborn propensity towards the choice of a partner of either the same or opposite sex." "Homosexuality is . . . filled with . . . destruction, mutual defeat, exploitation of the partner and the self . . . "

Those who mistakenly think homosexuality is natural and normal fail to make significant and much needed distinctions: between human beings and mere animals, between prescriptive and descriptive normality, between (what Emerson termed) "the law for man" and "the law for thing."

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW

### A case of loyalty

Binghamton, N.Y.

*To the Editors:* This is a response to the exchange between Stephen Elred and Cardinal Bernardin ["Gay Rights/Gay Plight," December 26].

Dear Stephen,

Your letter to Cardinal Bernardin is

*New from Rowman & Littlefield*

**THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST VISION**

**GARY J. DORRIEN**

A powerful interpretation of the modern democratic socialist tradition, which emphasizes the shift toward decentralized forms of socialization. The author, an Episcopal priest and author of *Logic and Consciousness*, traces the evolution of modern democratic socialism and offers a critically balanced assessment of the arguments for economic democracy.

"This is a splendid, valuable work, written with energy and style."
— Harvey Cox, Harvard University

"An engaging and persuasive argument for the contemporary relevance of a socialism that is deeply rooted in Christianity and firmly committed to political freedom."
— Robin Lovin, University of Chicago

"A wonderful book - lucid, intelligent, and moving."
— Lawrence S. Wittner, State University of New York

Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers. A division of Littlefield, Adams & Company. 81 Adams Drive, Totowa, NJ 07512 $27.50.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

based on several faulty assumptions. First, there is the assumption that if one articulates logical, carefully nuanced arguments against the fundamental rationale of the church's tenets, one's arguments deserve to be taken seriously: that their logical consistency and the foundations on which they are based should be subjected to a careful critique with openness and objectivity.

Such is not the case. Recall Cardinal Ratzinger's cavalier dismissal of Fr. Curran's lengthy and detailed clarifications. In the Catholic church it is sufficient to repeat the teaching of the church ("our teaching on sexuality stands"), and to point out that challenges to church teaching contradict the teaching of the church.

A second assumption, closely related, is that, because the church's teachings on homosexuality are based on philosophical reasoning, and not on divine revelation, it is appropriate to subject the church's philosophical reasoning to that same careful critique with openness and objectivity. Again this is not how we do things in the Catholic church.

On the one hand, the church does not deal in taboos; acts are immoral not because they are "forbidden," but for reasons that can be grasped by the intellect. On the other hand, the validity of such reasoning does not depend upon logical argument proceeding from sound premise, but upon the authority of those who propound it. . . . A third assumption is that if you muster arguments against a particular church policy (as distinct from church teaching), and invite the proponent of that policy to respond to your arguments in an appropriate forum, the proponent might accept the invitation. As you see, it's not that simple. . . . A fourth assumption is that the members of the hierarchy have a duty to make church teaching and policy credible to all who are entrusted to their pastoral care: not only to the "simple faithful," but also to educated and informed people who, in good faith, acknowledge various inadequacies in particular church teachings.

In the Catholic church, however, loyalty to the Holy Father takes precedence over all else, including intellectual integrity and concern for oppressed minorities. It is the supreme Catholic virtue. Therefore, the bishops' first duty is to make their pronouncements credible to the people at the Vatican. To do otherwise would be neither caring nor pastoral.

So, as you see, Stephen, some of your assumptions lack crucial support from both history and theology. About one thing, however, you are absolutely correct: if they find out who you are, you'll get an ecclesiastical footprint impressed on your backside faster than you can say "homophobia."

REV. ROBERT J. SULLIVAN

## Rejection & alienation

Barstow, Calif.

*To the Editors:* As one of your more persistent gadflies, I thank you for the piece by Stephen Elred ["Gay Rights/ Gay Plight," December 26]. It was an excellent run-down of the homosexual's situation, if a bit overcrowded.

Cardinal Bernardin's reply was reassuring. . . . There were also obvious difficulties. . . . The church has traditionally confused homophobia with holiness. . . . And I don't think that assuring homosexuals jobs, places to live, health benefits, and the normal legal protections of an American citizen "compromises the normativeness of heterosexual marital intimacy."

The small truth remains that the


# CLASSIFIED

RATES: 75¢ a word, one time; 68¢, three times; 64¢, six times; Classified payable with order; monthly in advance for more than three times. COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch St., NYC 10038.

### Priesthood

DESIRE PRIESTHOOD? Vocation certain? Call 1-800-633-2252. Father Nigro Gonzaga University, Spokane 99258.

### Biblical Institute

22nd Biblical Institute, Trinity College, Burlington, VT 05401, June 21-26, 1987. Faculty: Elizabeth Achtemeier, Paul Achtemeier, Joseph Agius, Peter Ellis, Wilfrid Harrington. Write: Sister Miriam Ward.

### Book

MYSTIFIED BY DECONSTRUCTION, Structuralism, "Neo-Marxism"? William C. Dowling, JAMESON, ALTHUSSER, MARX. $6.95 + 1.00 postage, Cornell University Press, 124 Roberts Pl., Ithaca, N.Y. 14851-0250.

### African Institute

Notre Dame's eighteenth program for Christians preparing to serve in Africa. 8 June — 1 July 1987. Information: Prof Peter Walshe, Department of Government, University of Notre Dame, Indiana 46556. Phone: (219) 232-0743 or 239-7312.

### 19th Annual Institute on Sacred Scripture

August 2-7, 1987. Distinguished Faculty: Elizabeth Achtemeier, Ph.D.; Paul Achtemeier, Ph.D.; Leslie Hoppe, O.F.M.; John Pilch, Ph.D. For brochure contact: Institute on Sacred Scripture, College Misericordia, Dallas, PA 18612. Or call (717) 675-3862. Registrations are being accepted now.

### Aging Religious: Our Responsibility

June 21-26, 1987. The Tenth annual Workshop for those working in retirement homes or programs for the aging in our religious communities. Also, optional pre-conference seminar (June 18-20) for those new to this ministry. For brochure contact: Institute of Gerontology, College Misericordia, Dallas, PA 18612. Or call (717) 675-3862. Registrations are being accepted now.

### Communities

At a crossroads on the Journey? The new residential program at St. Benedict Center, Madison invites people of all ages and backgrounds who seek spiritual growth, social change, or reflective time and space in a supportive, challenging "school of the spirit" to spend one, two, or three 10-week terms in community with us. For a catalog and full information, write: Parker J. Palmer, Dept. 48, St. Benedict Center, Box 5588, Madison WI 53705.




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

homosexual's natural, human, affectional life must be "disposable" just as everyone else's, before the greater transcendent love of God. It can't be the pivot of his concern. Homosexuals are making it that, defensively, in a church that has refused to acknowledge their existence. They're wrong in doing that. Theological snarls aside, God is what we are all about, not the world. Christ assured us that all sexuality, homo- and hetero-alike, will one day pass away and we shall "be like the angels."

Beyond the church's tangential meanderings, its basic truth subsists; there is a reproductive dimension to sexuality, which is its essence, which is distorted and blunted in same-sex expression. As an erotic and affectional preference, homosexuality is commensurate with heterosexuality, but only on erotic and affectional levels. Unfortunately, those levels are essential preliminaries of sexual expression, maybe the most important physical aspects of love.

The outcome, I believe, will have to be special dispensation, as theologically possible. Homosexuals will have to frankly admit that their love is deficient. They should be mature enough to not let it drive them into self-hatred.

RUSS COLE

## One small step

Logansport, Ind.

*To the Editors:* As a lay participant in the grassroots efforts that led to the Call to Action, I read *Commonweal*'s tenth anniversary commemoration [December 26, 1986] with a good deal of pleasure and fond nostalgia. . . . In retrospect the resolutions seem to respond to mainline Catholic concerns.

Today I am much more excited about the varied efforts at spiritual renewal in the parishes, retreat houses, prayer groups, and other groups working toward spiritual growth.

I am convinced that the Mystical Body of Christ is the sum of its parts, namely the individual members, and as we grow in grace, the church reflects this strength and beauty. . . . Committees and conferences can only provide directions and signposts along the way. These are essential contributions but will only be effective if implemented by a spiritually renewed membership.

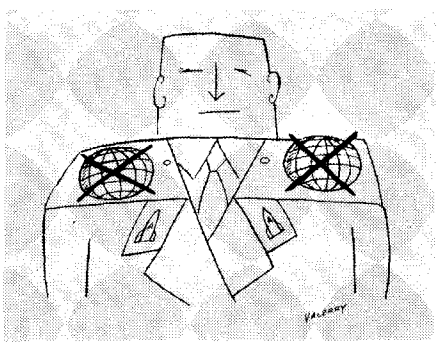
BILL McTAGGART

## Recruiting ads

Cambridge, Mass.

*To the Editors:* As a regular recipient of *Commonweal*'s appeals, I recognize the attraction any regular advertisement must hold for you. However, with each week's repetition of the "Aim High" ads for the Air Force Chaplaincy, I feel obliged to write.

I do not object to a military chaplaincy as such. As long as there are Christians who can reconcile a military career with the principles of their faith, they deserve and need the spiritual services chaplains provide. At the same time I am convinced of a need to *demilitarize* the chaplaincy by separating it completely (no rank, uniform, etc.) from the military establishment. This is too involved a subject to cover in a letter, but there are fundamental moral questions that I hope are discussed before *Commonweal* decides to devote space to a military recruitment effort of any kind.



In this particular case, given the 1983 peace pastoral and its teachings, one would hope some attempt was made to discover how Air Force chaplains handle the principles set forth by the bishops. The career described may be "exciting" and "fulfilling" and all that, but what seems to be more "relevant" is some indication as to what kind of spiritual instruction and leadership the chaplain is being trained to give to the young Catholic men and women being *prepared* right now to commit acts of war which, as Vatican II had it, are "offenses against God and man himself."

GORDON C. ZAHN

## Nicaraguan church

Paris

*To the Editors:* The article by John C. Cort ["Raised Voices in Nicaragua," November 21], a well-meaning and honest observer of the Nicaraguan church, was to me, a French woman, a most valuable source of information about a situation which for outsiders is so difficult to grasp.

In fact, it is sad news that there is a definite split in the church between sleepy conservatives and excited "revolutionary" progressives. One does not recognize in either of them the true face of Holy Mother Church.

I just want to add a piece of better news . . . about the church in France. "Latin men" here no longer stay outside of the church during the Mass (except perhaps in the countryside?). In the cities, there is now a "normal" crowd at church on Sundays. I mean, about as many men as women and young people as compared to pre-Vatican II times. I have a feeling it is more or less the same in Italian cities.

Thank you for *Commonweal*, a journal which does not quite have a counterpart in France. MRS. FREDERICK BREYDERT


*"and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."*
Jeremiah 6:13-14

**The Second National Conference on Family Violence and Theological Education**

**"TEACHER, PROPHET, PASTOR: CALLED TO MAKE JUSTICE IN THE FAMILY"**
October 22 - 25, 1987
Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Seattle, WA

Content includes:
- Teaching strategies for incorporating family violence information within Jewish and Christian theological disciplines.
- Legal, ethical issues confronting the teacher/cleric within the religious institution.
- Emerging issues of family violence and their implications for seminary communities.

For an information packet contact:
Maryviolet C. Burns, M.Div.,
Conference Coordinator
The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
1914 N. 34th St., Suite 105
Seattle, Washington 98103
Telephone: (206) 634-1903




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Saint Mary's College

announces
a workshop on governance and management
in Catholic institutions

# ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

**MAY 31, 1987 through June 5, 1987**

Saint Mary's College is pleased to announce an intensive, one-week workshop on leadership, management, governance, development and change for those serving the Church and Church-related organizations in managerial and administrative capacities.

The workshop format will include formal presentations, facilitated small group work, guided work on individual projects and community building experiences which will allow participants to draw on the wealth of resources in the group as a whole. In addition, the workshop week will include daily liturgy, recreational activities, social gatherings and opportunities to enjoy the beautifully scenic surrounding area.

Workshop staff includes Brother Louis DeThomasis, FSC, Ph.D., president of Saint Mary's College and author of *My Father's Business: Creating a new future for the people of God;* Father Robert Yeager, vice president for development, NCEA; Sister Lourdes Sheehan, executive director, National Association of Boards of Education, NCEA; James Haudan, Diocese of Toledo; Father Joseph Massucci, professor of educational administration and Catholic schools consultant; I. Shelby Andress, director of consulting services, Search Institute; and Elinor Ford, book publisher and noted lecturer.

Saint Mary's College, located in Winona, Minnesota, is a Catholic liberal arts college founded in 1912. The college has been administered by the Christian Brothers since 1933. Saint Mary's is located on a beautiful 350-acre campus, 125 miles southeast of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Dr. Daniel J. Maloney**
**ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS**
**Saint Mary's College**
**Winona, Minnesota 55987**




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED